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DIFFERENT DREAMS



One more Children's
Special is in your hands—to mark
Children's Day. November, which
comes after the mid-term tests and before
the half year holidays, is generally a month full of activities for children.
Chandamama has, for the last five years, been trying out a unique experiment,
of inviting stories from children for the Special and bringing some talented young
artists over to Chennai to draw illustrations for the selected stories. The result of all these
efforts this year is here for you to see, read and enjoy.

After going through the several stories that came as entries, we wish to make certain observations. We are rather surprised that a majority of the stories revolve round dreams! We do admit that children are given to dreaming which arises from imagination. However, when a story is convincingly built up and narrated, to conclude it by saying it is all a dream is to give the story an anticlimax. Children generally acquire the power of observation early in life and naturally develop a sense of curiosity and thirst for information. How we wish they brought in the element of realism while churning out stories in their minds.

A sure aid for this will be reading. Reading both fiction and non-fiction will certainly satisfy curiosity. Along with reading, let them continue dreaming, dream about their future, about their motherland, which is what our beloved President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, often exhorts children to indulge in.

When we speak of realism, we simply mean the happenings around us. Some of them can be the themes for stories or interesting items of non-fiction. There cannot be any dearth of subjects to write about; it is the presentation that matters. If the writing skill is honed during childhood times, it will help become an effective writer.

This magazine attempts to give the young readers a cross-section of the past, present, and the future through its various features. This, we find, is appreciated by both the young and the old alike among our readers. Meanwhile, we compliment the several children who took part in the competition and thank their parents for encouraging their wards to respond to our announcement.

DIWALI GREETINGS to our readers, parents, and all well-wishers.

Visit us at : http://www.chandamama.org

One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws.

There can be no such thing, in law or in morality, as actions forbidden to an individual, but permitted to a mob.

—Ayn Rand

The most persistent sound which reverberates through man's history is the beating of war drums.

-Arthur Koestler

NANDAN KANAN BECKONS



Literally meaning the 'garden of gods', Nandan Kanan has acquired world fame as the home of the largest number of the rare white tiger. There are currently more than 30 of them in this 45-year-old biological park situated some 20km from Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa.

Zoos the world over have in their proud possession about 50 white tigers and a majority of them have gone from Nandan Kanan. It was in 1980 that the first litter of three white tigers were born to Deepak and Ganga. The cubs born in subsequent years found homes in zoos in India and elsewhere.

The white tiger safari in Nandan Kanan is spread over an area of 12 hectares which have motorable roads. Nandan Kanan has also a separate lion safari, the first of its kind in the world, in a sprawling 20 hectares. Nandan Kanan Zoo lies in the splendid environs of the Chandaka forest, which has the Kanjia lake, as wide as 50 hectares, on one side. In this

forest and lake live nearly 70 kinds of mammals, 20 varieties of reptiles and 80 species of birds in peaceful co-existence. Another attraction in Nandan Kanan are the 34 aquaria housing a large variety of fresh water fish. The 620m long aerial ropeway and cable car are the first of its kind for an Indian zoo. One recalls what the Buddha had said: "The forest is a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance and extends generously the products of its life-activity."



"BE A DREAM CHILD" CONTEST

Ist Prize : Shankha Banerjee (14)

Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh

IInd Prize : Ankitha A.S. (12)

Secunderabad, Andhra

Pradesh

IIIrd Prize : Nibedita Mahata (13)

Dispur, Assam

The successful entries will appear in the December 2004 issue

"READ AND REACT" CONTEST PRIZE WINNERS

July 2004 : Aamir Arfin (13)

Rourkela, Orissa

August 2004 : Manoj Thomas (14)

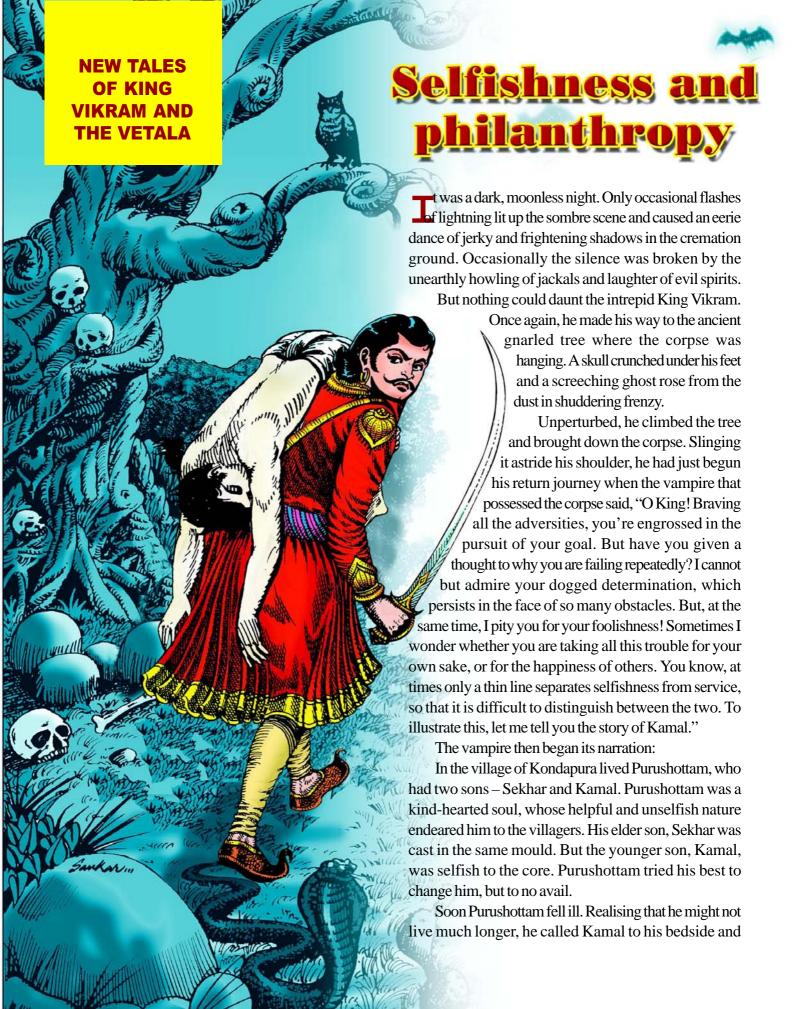
Trivandrum, Kerala

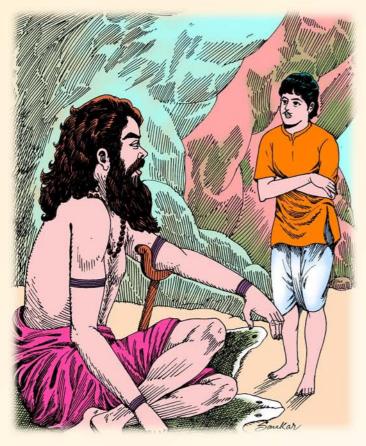
September 2004: Madhurima Ganguly (10)

Santragachi

Howrah, W.Bengal

Look for the prize winning entries in the next issue.





advised him, "Son, this village is not the right place for you. I shall tell you a way by which you can live in comfort. If you go deep into the forest adjoining our village, you will come to a hill. Exactly halfway up the hill is a dark cave. A hermit named Anand lives there. Meet him - he will help you."

Kamal thought: 'Father has given away all his property to Sekhar and he's now trying to fob me off with this tale of a hermit!'

Soon afterwards, Purushottam breathed his last. It was only after his death that Kamal realised that he had wronged his father – Purushottam's only 'property' was his good nature. He had earned no money or possessions to bequeath to his sons.

Kamal found himself a destitute after his father's death. But his brother, Sekhar, said, "Don't worry, Kamal. You stay with me. I shall take care of you."

The selfish Kamal was greatly relieved by this assurance. Now that his brother was there to shoulder his burden, he returned to his carefree life without any qualms of conscience.

As the days passed, the villagers began praising Sekhar for his exemplary consideration for his brother. Simultaneously they also denounced Kamal for sponging off his noble brother. When he heard the criticism, Kamal was furious. He flounced up to his brother and angrily demanded, "It was at your invitation that I stayed on here – so, how dare the people condemn me?"

Sekhar replied, "Kamal, you never go to the help of anyone – so, naturally, they take you for a selfish person. If you really wish to hear praise instead of criticism, then go to the help of others!"

"Why should I?" demanded Kamal. "What did you and father gain by helping others? My aim is not to make a name as a philanthropist. I want to become a rich man and live well. Tell me how I may achieve this!"

"To make money, one must be skilled in business, agriculture, or the arts. To be frank, I lack these skills. You may yourself try and find some way to make your fortune," explained Sekhar.

Kamal realised that while he longed to become rich, he could not think of any means of making money! Finally, he remembered his father's advice and decided to meet the hermit Anand and seek his help. Accordingly, he set out into the forest.

Although Anand was an emaciated figure with matted hair and an unkempt beard, his eyes glowed with an unearthly radiance. Anand bowed to him, introduced himself, and told him why he had come.

Anand heard him out and said, "I can help you become rich instantly. But if I do that, it will cause problems for both of us." He then told Kamal how he and Kamal's father had been close friends from their boyhood days. But their outlook on life was very different. While Purushottam was an altruist who found pleasure in helping others, with no selfish motive whatever, Anand was only interested in his own advancement.

One day, when the two friends were travelling, they came across a holy man lying on the road. Evidently he had fallen down and hurt himself; his foot was bleeding. Brushing aside Anand's efforts to dissuade him, Purushottam rushed to the holy man's aid. He helped him to sit up, cleaned his wound, and treated it with a paste of healing herbs.

The holy man embraced Purushottam and said, "My son, I possess a magical talisman having the power to grant every wish of its owner. Being an ascetic, I've no need for it. I've been searching for a worthy person to whom I could give it away. All this was a drama I enacted for that purpose. Here's the talisman – take it and live happily!" And he held it out to Purushottam.

But instead of accepting it, Purushottam said with folded hands, "O holy one! I've no need for this talisman. Having wealth in excess of one's needs will ultimately bring one to grief. So, kindly give it to someone else!"

But the holy man shook his head and replied, "From this moment, the talisman is yours. You may find someone worthy of it and give it away to him. However, if you give it to an unworthy person, it will have disastrous consequences."

Now, on hearing about the talisman's magical properties, Anand was keen to possess it. He asked, "O holy one, what could be these consequences? And who is worthy of the talisman?"

The hermit smiled and replied, "Some things can be learnt only by experience. I can tell you this much—if an unworthy person gets the talisman, it will not stay long with him. It will change hands repeatedly, and return to the original owner. Ultimately, getting disgusted with worldly life, he will renounce the world. But he cannot attain salvation."

Purushottam, who had been listening to this exchange, now turned to his friend, Anand and asked, "You wish to have this talisman, don't you? I shall give it to you with pleasure, as I believe you're worthy of it." Without any hesitation, he presented the talisman to Anand.

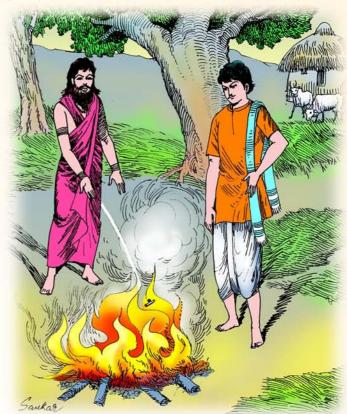
Soon after he acquired the talisman, Anand's life underwent a dramatic change. He became successful in all his ventures, and achieved everything that he wished for. But he was not ready to share his bounty, and did not spend even a paisa in charity. Consequently, he was labelled as a selfish man. Before a year had passed, he gave away the talisman. But soon afterwards, it came back into his possession. This happened repeatedly. Eventually he became fed up with life. His health, too, deteriorated. Gradually things came to such a pass that he could not bear the sight of light. Eventually he

renounced the world and came to live in this dark cave.

Purushottam was deeply saddened by his friend's plight. He was even more distressed to think that it was he himself who had unwittingly caused it. He visited Anand and said, "I never thought the talisman would land you in such a terrible condition! I'll have no peace until you attain salvation. Let me try to free you from the talisman's clutches." However, he died before he could fulfil his promise.

The hermit Anand concluded his narration and said to Kamal, "Son, your father's soul will not attain salvation until I am saved. That is why he has sent you here – to take the talisman from me, thus giving redemption to his soul and mine. But I cannot let you suffer for my selfish interest – hence, I have revealed the secret of the talisman. You cannot keep it for over a year on any count. It will land you in difficulties. You will then return it to me, causing more problems for me!"

Kamal politely replied, "O wise one, my father was a great philanthropist. He knew that I am self-seeking by nature. He wanted some service to be mixed in my selfishness—such was his greatness! It will be a matter of great joy for me if my selfish ambition could bring about





The smallest living bird is generally acknowledged to be the bee hummingbird of Cuba, which is 6.3 cm (2.5 inches) long and weighs less than 3 gm (about 0.1 ounce)

Only domestic cats hold their tail vertically while walking, wild cats hold them horizontally or tucked between legs.



the salvation of two souls – those of my father and yourself. Please give me the talisman. I promise you I shall keep it with me permanently."

Anand blessed Kamal and handed over the talisman to him. After having acquired it, Kamal achieved success in all his ventures. But there was a great change in his nature. He was no more selfish. He used the money brought in by the talisman's power to help the needy.

A year went by. By then, Kamal had made a lot of money. One day, the hermit Anand came to meet him. He said, "Kamal, please return the talisman to me."

Kamal took off the talisman, which he was wearing around his neck, and handed it to Anand. Anand examined it and said, "I have come to tell you something important. Thanks to you, your father's soul has attained salvation. I, too, shall soon be liberated. Now you don't have any need for this talisman. Let me get rid of it so that it does not go to some unworthy man's hands in future, to create more trouble!"

He lit a fire and dropped the talisman into it. Then he walked away without looking back.

Having concluded the story, the vampire turned to

King Vikram and asked, "O King! Kamal's selfish motive had brought about the salvation of Purushottam and Anand. So, is selfishness a desirable quality? Did the talisman lose its evil power by Anand's blessing? If so, couldn't Anand have blessed one of the previous recipients of the talisman similarly and saved himself all this trouble? If you remain silent even though you may know the answer, your head will be blown to pieces!"

King Vikram had a ready answer. "Selfishness is not something laudable. But as long as it does not harm anyone, it is not blameworthy either. Although Kamal was at heart a self-centred man, he never wished ill of anyone. As for the talisman's evil power, it did not vanish by Anand's blessing. The thought of his father caused Kamal to have a change of heart. It was this change that destroyed the talisman's evil influence. When Kamal changed his lifestyle and became service-minded, the talisman lost its power to harm him, as he proved himself worthy of keeping it!"

No sooner had King Vikram concluded answering the vampire than the corpse gave him the slip once again. Squaring his shoulders, the king set off in hot pursuit.





hundred and fifty years ago, the Indian postal system was reorganised as an independent organisation and given national importance. The Post Office Act of 1854 gave total monopoly to the government of conveying letters and managing the 600 odd post offices located in different parts of the country.

To go back into history, the English East India Company, which had establishments in Madras, Surat and Calcutta, opened the first post office in Bombay in 1688. Post offices were later set up in Madras and Calcutta. The three Presidency towns were connected by overland routes which were used by the relay "runners". The office of the first Post Master General was established in Calcutta in 1774. The three post offices now began charging a fee on private letters. It was two annas (approximately 13 paise) per 100 miles. This was to be paid by the addressee and not the sender!

Till 1837, the three Presidencies operated their own postal systems. The P.O.Act of 1837 integrated the three services. In 1850, the three cities had Post Masters General. In 1854, with the passing of the new Post Office Act, the post of one Director General of Central Postal Authority was created. A uniform postage, irrespective of the distance, came into existence. This necessitated the printing of postage "labels", which were the precursors of postage stamps in India. The postage paid by the sender was fixed at half an anna (approx. 3 paise). In 1854 there were 652 post offices in the country.

By that time, the country witnessed the advent of railway and laying of tracks to run trains. The government introduced what came to be known as the Bullock-train. These carriages hauled by bullocks ran between Allahabad

and Delhi, and this service was extended to Lahore and Peshawar. The bullock-train used to carry passengers, besides mail and parcels. India was the first country to carry mail by air. On February 18, 1911, a French national called M.Picquet carried a bag containing some 6,500 letters and postcards when he flew between Allahabad and Naini.

Currently, India has the largest postal network in the world, with 155,000 post offices in towns,

and 140,000 post offices in villages. In 1947, free India had only 23,000 post offices. In 2003, the post offices handled 9,000,000,000 individual articles!

The first postage stamp used in India in 1854 was issued in four denominations—half anna, one anna, two annas and four annas. One sheet of 4 annas stamps earned world fame because the stamps had the picture of Queen Victoria "inverted". The stamps are now one of the most prized possessions with philatelists.

From the pen of Ruskin Bond

A MOUNTAIN STREAM

here is a brook at the bottom of the hill. From where I live, I can always hear its murmur, but I am no longer conscious of the sound except when I return from a trip to the plains. And yet I have grown so used to the constant music of water that when I leave it behind, I feel naked and alone, bereft of my moorings. It is like getting accustomed to the friendly rattle of tea cups every morning, and then waking up one day to an empty stillness and a fleeting moment of panic.

Below the house is a forest of oak and maple and Himalayan rhododendron. A path twists its way down through the trees, over an open ridge where red sorrel grows wild, and then down steeply through a tangle of thorn bushes, creepers and rangal bamboo. At the bottom of the hill the path leads on to a grassy verge, surrounded by wild roses. The stream runs close by the verge, tumbling over smooth pebbles, over rocks worn yellow with age, on its way to the plains and to the little Song river and finally to the sacred Ganges.

When I first discovered the stream, it was April and the wild roses were flowering, small white blossoms lying in clusters. There were still pink and blue primroses on the hill-slopes, and an occasional late-flowering rhododendron provided a splash of crimson against the dark green of the hill.

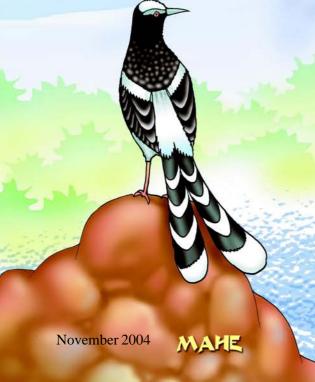
A spotted forktail, a bird of the Himalayan streams, was much in evidence during those early visits. It moved nimbly over the boulders with a fairy tread, and continually wagging its tail. Both of us had a fondness for standing in running water. Once, while I stood in the stream, I saw a snake swim past, a slim brown snake, beautiful and lonely. A snake in water is a lovely creature.

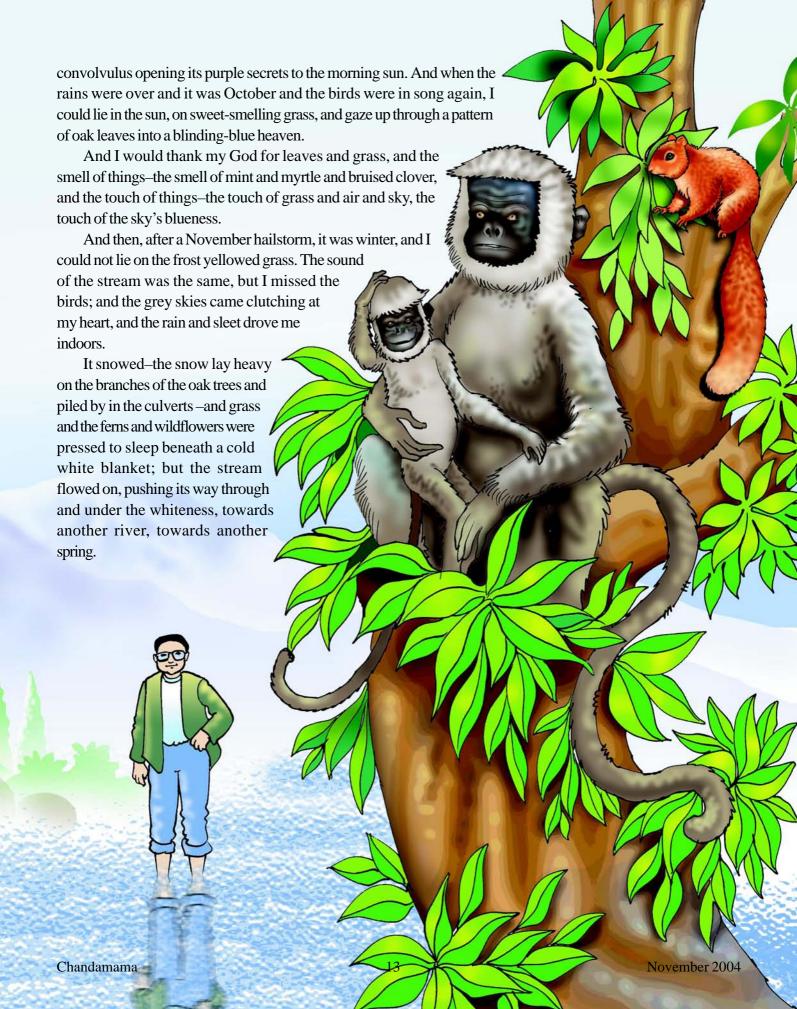
In May and June, when the hills were always brown and dry, it remained cool and green near the stream, where ferns and maidenhair and long grasses continued to thrive. Downstream I found a small pool where I could bathe, and a cave with water dripping from the roof, the water spangled gold and silver in the shafts of sunlight that pushed through the slits in the cave roof.

Few people came there. Sometimes a milkman or a coal-burner would cross the stream on his way to a village; but the nearby hill-station's summer visitors had not discovered this haven of wild and green things.

The monkeys—langurs, with white and silver grey fur, black faces and long swishing tails—had discovered the place, but they kept to the trees and sunlit slopes. They grew quite accustomed to my presence, and carried on about their work and play as though I did not exist. They were clean and polite, much nicer than the red monkeys of the plains.

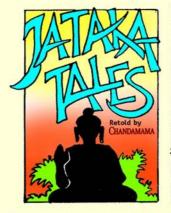
During the rains, the stream became a rushing torrent, bushes and small trees were swept away, and the friendly murmur of the water became a threatening boom. I did not visit the place too often, as there were leeches in the long grass. But it was always worthwhile tramping through the forest to feast my eyes on the foliage that sprang up in tropical profusion—soft, springy moss; great stag-ferns on the trunks of trees; mysterious and sometimes evil-looking lilies and orchids; wild dahlias, and the climbing

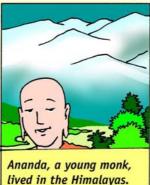


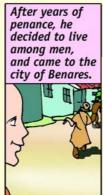


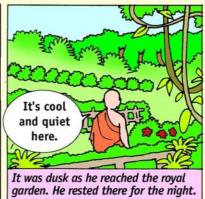
Jataka Tales

Pray Preach Not!





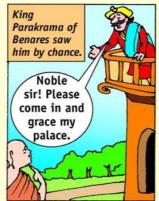


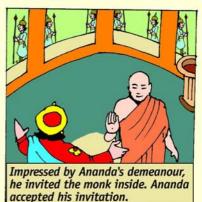


The next day Ananda set out begging for alms.

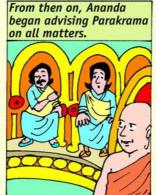
Bikshamdehi!

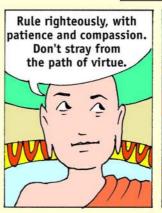


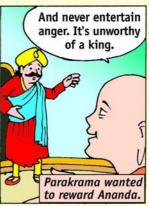








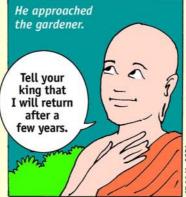


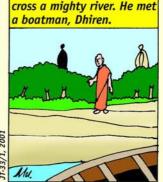




But Ananda turned down the offer. He had no need for wealth.



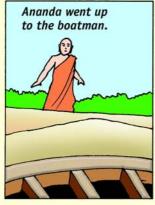


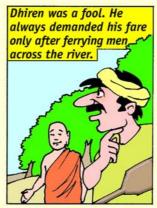


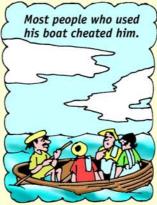
On his way, Ananda had to

Jataka Tales

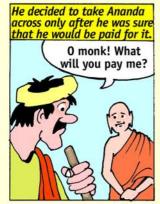
Pray Preach Not!

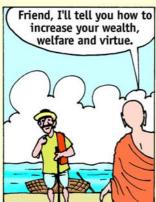


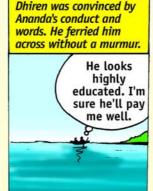




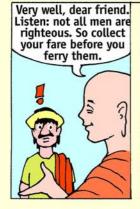


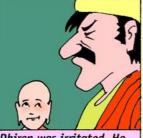




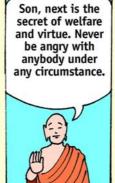






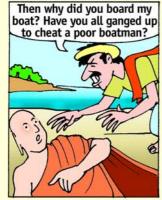


Dhiren was irritated. He wanted hard cash for daily expenses. But the monk was giving him a lecture.

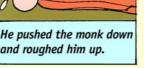




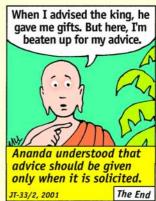












A PAGE FROM INDIAN HISTORY



Chanakya Learns a Lesson

The name of Chanakya, the wise prime minister of Chandragupta

Maurya, is only too familiar to students of history. There is an interesting story about how he learned one of the most important lessons in war strategy from an uneducated village woman.

Going back to the beginnings, Chanakya was born in a very poor family. His father, Chani, was a wise and learned man although he had no wealth. It is said that baby Chanakya had pearly white teeth. Astrologers told Chani that the boy was fated to be a king. He expected Chani to be delighted to hear this. But Chani was

disturbed by the prediction and remarked that the life of a king is by no means a happy one. Most kings crave for more

money and more power, and this inevitably led them to fight and often do things that are neither fair nor moral. Chani did not wish such a life for his son. So he broke the teeth of his infant son. But the astrologers merely laughed and said his action was not likely to change his son's destiny. But it would thwart it to some extent. He might not be a king himself but would certainly be a ruler's right hand man and virtually rule the kingdom.

Chanakya imbibed all the scholarship of his father. He had a razor sharp intellect and a fantastic memory. But despite all his wisdom, Chanakya remained as poor as his father and had a tough time trying to make both ends meet. Once, when his wife went to her father's home to attend a family wedding, her sisters made fun of her

because she was wearing a dress made of coarse cloth and no jewellery at all.

They teased her about her rough, work-worn hands and the absense of oil in her hair. In fact, they

treated her like a maid and refused to sit near her. Chanakya's wife returned home crying. Though she did not complain or criticize her own people, Chanakya found out what had gone wrong and decided to do something about it.

He had heard that King
Nanda, the ruler of
Pataliputra, honoured wise
men and often gave them a
place in his kingdom. Chanakya
decided to land up there. On
reaching the palace, Chanakya asked

the doorman if he could meet the king. He was shown in and asked to sit and wait for the king. Chankya saw that the empty throne was the best seat in the court. He was proud of his birth and wisdom and so went and sat in the king's seat! Nanda arrived and was very angry to find a man in tattered clothes sitting on his throne. He asked one of his attendants to find another seat for Chanakya. The attendant spoke politely at first but when he realized that the strange man had no intention of getting up, he simply pushed Chanakya out of the seat! Chankya was very angry at this insult and swore that he would oust Nanda from his kingdom some day.

Chanakya remembered what the astrologer had predicted and decided to find the right man who would be a king and yet be guided by him in all matters. He

wandered all over the kingdom and finally reached a place in the foothills of the Himalayas where a tribe called 'Mauryas' lived. As Chanakya rested under a tree, he saw a group of young boys playing. One of them pretended to be a king while the rest played at being the king's soldiers. The boy who was posing as king looked very sharp and intelligent. Chanakya went up to him and said, "I'm a poor Brahmin, your majesty. Please let me have a gift."

The young boy, whose name was Chandragupta, looked at him and said, "I give you all these cows that are grazing in this field."

"But they don't belong to you and so they are not yours to be made a gift of," said Chanakya smiling. "What shall I do if the actual owners come and bash me up?"

"You can't own things if you are afraid of protecting them," said young Chandragupta at once, "one has to fight for one's rights in this world."

Chanakya was so impressed by Chandragupta's words that he asked him, "Do you really want to become a king?" "Of course, I do".

"Then come with me," said Chanakya, "and I shall help you become one."

Chandragupta left his home to accompany Chanakya. He used his brains to collect enough money to raise an army for Chandragupta. He taught them all that he knew about fighting battles and Chandragupta about the rights and duties of a king. Chanakya, who remembered how he had been insulted by King Nanda, decided to attack him. But Chandragupta's army was small and inexperienced, compared to Nanda's and could not stand up to them. Badly defeated,

Chandragupta had to flee along

with Chanakya.

One day as Chanakya entered a little village in quest of food, he passed by a poor man's hut. He heard the excited voice of children. Their mother was serving them hot rice porridge. Suddenly a young boy started crying that his fingers had been burnt. "Well, what do you expect?" he heard the woman say. "Naturally they will get burnt if you are as foolish as Chanakya."

Intrigued and curious, Chanakya barged into the room. "Who are you?" asked the mother of the children. "What do you want?"

"I just came in to find out the meaning of your words," said Chanakya. The woman was surprised. "I was merely telling the children to eat properly," she said, "I had served them hot rice porridge. They should have realized that it was hottest at the centre and started eating from the outer fringe which cools first."

"Yes, but what has Chanakya's foolishness got to do with it?" asked Chanakya.

"Everything," said the woman smiling, "Chanakya is so foolish, he went and attacked Nanda's kingdom at the outset instead of conquering the small kingdoms all around before going to the centre. Just like this foolish child trying to eat the hot porridge from the

middle! That's why Chanakya lost and had to flee."

"Thank you so much, mother," said Chanakya to the woman "You've taught me a wonderful lesson in war strategy. I shall not make the same mistake a second time."

Chandragupta and Chanakya reorganized their army and set about conquering the smaller kingdoms first and getting them under them. Eventually, they succeeded in ousting Nanda from Pataliputra. But Nanda's daughter and young Chandragupta fell in love and she stayed back as the queen in her father's kingdom.

- By Swapna Dutta

ASTROLOGER FOR A DAY

under was the royal gardener. The king usually took long walks in the garden every morning. The princess and her friends often strayed into the garden whenever they wished to have a merry time. In the evening, it would be the turn of the queen, accompanied by her maid-inwaiting, to spend time in the garden enjoying the cool breeze. All this royal activity kept Sunder busy from morn till evening, to ensure that the garden remained spick and span, the grass cut to the carpet level and the bushes trimmed so that the flowers could be seen from every nook and corner.

He could return home only after the queen had gone back to her apartments. All the while, his wife Sundari would be eagerly awaiting his return. After dinner, they indulged in gossip, when Sunder did not forget to praise her beauty and compare her looks with the lovely roses that grew in the royal garden. Sundari did not fail to notice how proud her husband was to possess a wife like her.

But Sundari held a secret grouse, though sometimes

she did dare to give vent to her feelings. "You spend all your time in the garden and have never thought of showing me round. I know, the royalty would be around and I should not be seen loitering there."

Sunder tried to pacify her. "Some day, the king will go on a pilgrimage with the queen and the princess. And then I shall take you to the royal garden. So, be patient," he told her. "All right?"

"No, there's something more I've been wanting to tell you," said Sundari, rather hesitantly.



"What's it?" asked Sunder, with some anxiety.

"Look at the royal astrologer's wife. She is always dressed in the best of Banares silks and she has several ornaments. And look at me..." Sundari put out an aggrieved face.

"But ... but ... I'm only a gardener. How can I buy expensive dress and jewellery?" Sunder expressed his predicament.

"You can also become an astrologer!" said Sundari plainly, and looked at her husband's face to see his reaction.

"You're joking, Sundari," said Sunder looking straight into her face. "What do I know of planets and stars? How then can I become an astrologer?"

"Don't worry about that," said Sundari sounding very clever. "I've already collected some cowries and



horoscope charts and almanacs and prayer beads and a saffron shawl. You'll look a real astrologer."

Sunder was now really dumbfounded. He thought for a while and decided to humour her. Fortunately, he heard that the king had received an invitation from the neighbouring kingdom and he and the entire royal household would be leaving on a week's visit. He waited for the royal departure and the next morning he appeared in the market-place dressed like an astrologer.

The people who had never seen an astrologer in the market-place—in fact, they could be generally found only in the portico of their houses—were only curious and did not seek his advice about their past, present, or future. But Kishorelal was different. He was the court jeweller and he came to Sunder in urgency. "Are you really an astrologer? Can you help me?" (By the way, he could not have possibly approached the royal astrologer.)

Sunder thought it advisable to close his eyes and appear as if he was meditating. "Please don't take me to be rude," said Kishorelal apologetically.

He moved closer to Sunder and almost whispered. "I'm the court jeweller and I'm resetting the king's crown. But the ruby to be placed in the centre missing! If you can tell me where to search for it before dusk today, I shall give you a hundred gold coins. If the crown is not ready before the king returns, I'm sure to be executed. Please help!"

Sunder now opened his eyes. There was a faint smile on his lips. Kishorelal thought it was a hint. He hurriedly got up and said, "I shall come back in the evening, O Wise One!"

Sunder saw the receding figure of the court jeweller and laughed to himself. The next moment, the smile vanished from his face and he became serious. He wondered, where on the earth–forget all the other planets; he did not even know their names—would he search for the missing ruby with the help of the cowries lying front of him or the rosary around his neck? He was in a fix; he cursed his wife for forcing him to such a ridiculous situation.

Suddenly he realised that somebody was breathing heavily by his side. It was a young woman, and she was gasping. She folded her shaking hands in supplication and



in near whispers she said, "O Wise One! I'm the royal jeweller's wife. The ruby for the king's crown had fallen down on the floor and I saw it while I was sweeping. I heard my husband cursing himself and shouting at everybody and threatening our neighbours and running out like a mad man. He was afraid of going to the court astrologer for advice. Someone told him about the new astrologer who had come to the market-place and I went behind him and overheard what he told you. I've brought the ruby with me. You may please give it to him. But don't tell him that I brought it to you. I shall give you a hundred gold coins for saving my name!"

As the woman was searching for the ruby among the folds of her sari, Sunder told her in a grave tone, "Sister, don't take it out and give it to me. You may go back and place it below your husband's mattress, and leave the rest to me!"

The woman heaved a sigh of great relief and went away. During the day, Sunder had a few "customers" and he sent them away satisfied with his half-baked, half-concocted knowledge of astrology. As he was seldom seen outside the royal garden, he was not immediately recognised as the royal gardener.

Towards evening, the court jeweller came back with

a crestfallen face. "O Wise One! You must help me. I searched everywhere but I couldn't find the missing ruby. If I don't retrieve it before the king came back from his visit, you will see my head rolling on the ground. Please tell me, O Wise One, where the precious stone has gone and hidden itself. Or is it now in the possession of someone I know or don't know? Please speak!"

Sunder slowly opened his eyes. He was already turning the beads of the rosary in his palm, all the while chanting an incantation with half-open lips. He pulled out some horoscope charts, looked intently at the squares and triangles drawn on them and raised his face. The court jeweller's heart was beating fast, anxiously awaiting words to fall from the astrologer's mouth. "You've looked for the ruby in every nook and corner," he said and paused for a moment, "except one place, and the ruby is very much there safe!"

The court jeweller could not bear the suspense any longer. "Where, O Wise One, where did I omit to check? Please tell me quick!"

"Beneath your mattress! Where else?" said Sunder without batting an eyelid. "I can see it here." He pointed at a triangle in one of the charts lying in front of him, though the royal jeweller could only see a triangle with some letters written inside.

"I believe your word, O Wise One!" he said, as he placed a bag of coins before the astrologer. "Please accept my humble offering. I've no doubt you have saved my neck and I shall come back with a larger gift." He then hurriedly got up and went away.

Sunder did not open the bag, but he felt its weight on his palm and was certain that it contained a hundred coins that the court jeweller had promised. Sometime later, his wife turned up again and placed a bag in front of the astrologer. "Thank you, O Wise One, for saving my prestige. My husband does not know that I had picked up the ruby from the floor. He would have suspected that I had taken it off the king's crown." She then went away.

Sunder looked around and made certain that nobody had seen the court jeweller's wife meeting him and handing him a pouch. It was only now that he noticed how gracefully she had draped herself in a costly silk sari. He then remembered what Sundari had remarked about the

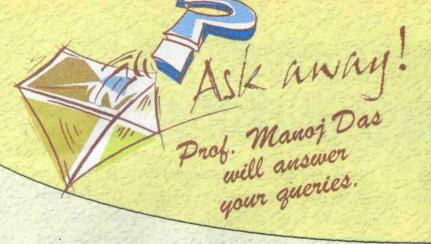
saris worn by the court astrologer's wife. Now, he would be able to fulfil his wife's desire.

He packed up the astrologer's charts, almanacs, cowries and other aides and left for home. On reaching there, he showed her the gold coins he had earned, though he took care not to reveal how and from whom he had received them. Sundari came to the conclusion that her husband had earned recognition as a competent astrologer even on the first day. "My lord! You must seriously think of leaving the job of a gardener and be..."

Sunder did not allow her to complete the sentence. "Sundari, you know how much of astrology I know. No, I can't pretend to be an astrologer. Today, it was different due to my luck, but tomorrow or the day after, the truth will be out. Let's be happy with what we have. I would better remain the keeper of the royal garden. You go and buy whatever clothes and jewellery you like to have and forget that I was an astrologer for a day. I can't even predict what Fortune holds for us tomorrow!"

Sundari smiled and Sunder saw her face blossoming like the yellow rose in the royal garden.





Send your questions to: Ask Away Chandamama India Ltd. No.82 Defence Officers Colony Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.

A scholar from Chennai, who addressed the teachers and students of our school, quoted some excellent lines from Alwars. After he left, I asked my class teacher who these Alwars were. All she could say was they were devotional poets. Would you please shed some light on them?

Tripti Bishnoi, Udaipur

Your teacher is right. The Alwars were poets

devoted to Vishnu. But, of course, they were much more. Several of them were sages and Yogis with deep spiritual experiences. As you know, Tamil is one of the oldest living languages in the world, comparable for its antiquity only to Sanskrit. Its literary tradition goes back to two thousand years, if not more. An important aspect of this hoary tradition is made of contributions by the Alwars - lyrics that are still sung in Vaishnavite shrines and couplets that are a part of the daily vocabulary of the people.

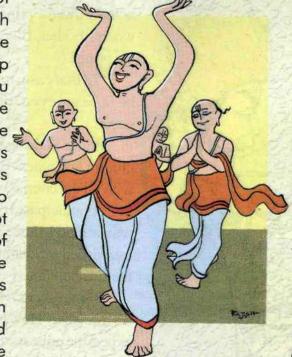
The first three great Alwars were contemporaries, but unknown to one unoliner. On a rainy night, one of them took shelter in a small room in a temple. As he lay sprawled

on the floor, the second one entered and said, "If there is space enough for one to lie down, there should be space enough for two to sit." The first one sat up. As both sat waiting for the rain to stop, a third one entered the room and said, "If there is space enough for two to sit, there should be space enough for three to stand." All the three stood, talking to one another. Their joy knew no bounds when they realized that all of them were devotees of Lord

Vishnu. Thereafter they moved together for a long time, singing the glory of the Lord in ecstasy. People looked upon them as abnormal. No wonder their real names were soon forgotten. They became known as Poygai or the madcap, Bhootam or the ghost and Pey Alwar or the lunatic. Among the other renowned Alwars are Thirumalasai and Nammalvar – the latter a great poet.

Even a prince named Kulakshar became an Alwar ascetic and lived in the

precincts of the famous temple of Vishnu in Srirangam. The Alwars enriched Tamil literature with the saga of Krishna and the episodes in his life, along with many other elevating elements.

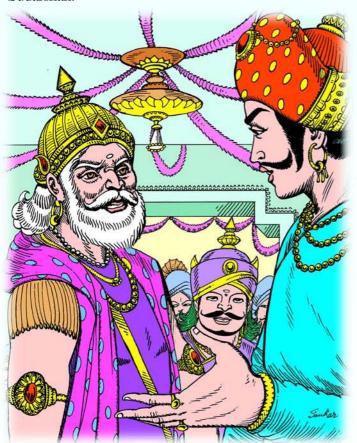


CLIMPSES OF THE DEVI BHAGAVATAM

The queen of Kasi tried to convince Princess Sasikala that she was not being wise by choosing Sudarshan for her husband.

Replied the princess: "Mother, you say Sudarshan lives in a forest, and is poor and helpless. You fear that by marrying him I won't be happy. But, mother, happiness is a state of mind. For me forest is no less beautiful than a palace. Besides, my fate is in the hands of the Divine Mother."

The queen heaved a great sigh and went and told her husband, King Subahu, what their daughter's wish was. The good king did not like to disappoint his daughter. He delayed the swayamvara and sent an invitation to Sudarshan.



Sasikala also sent a messenger to the prince in the forest. He met Sudarshan and told him, "Our princess would prefer to die rather than marry anyone else. She wants you to present yourself at the swayamvar without any hesitation."

Prince Sudarshan expressed his desire to attend the swayamvara to his mother. Queen Manorama was shocked. "No, my son! There's nobody to come to your rescue, not even a bodyguard, should any danger befall you. King Yudhajit might want the princess to marry his grandson. He spared you once because of his fear of the sage. But once you are away from the forest and you prove yourself a rival to his grandson, he would not spare you!"

"Mother, I feel I've divine protection. It is not for nothing that the princess has set her heart upon me. Don't worry, mother, I'll return to the forest with glory," said the prince.

"In that case, my son, let me go with you. I cannot be at peace even for a moment without you," said the queen.

Prince Sudarshan, along with his mother, got into his chariot and reached Kasi. King Subahu received them with all the courtesy due to a royal guest.

As anticipated by Queen Manorama, King Yudhajit was already there along with his grandson. He was astonished at Sudarashan's audacity in coming to attend the swayamvara.

Some other invitees were also heard to talk amongst themselves: "How ambitious is Sudarshan! How can he expect the princess to choose a helpless young man living in exile?" King Yudhajit told some of the guests, "If Princess Sasikala would reject my grandson and choose Sudarshan instead, I'll not brook it quietly. I'll finish Sudarshan here itself!"

11. A CRITICAL SITUATION



"Yudhajit, such an attitude is not expected of an old and prudent king like you," said one of the kings. "Isn't it the privilege of the princess to choose her bridegroom? It is rumoured that you only had deprived Prince Sudarshan of his legitimate right. If you harass him here, the rumour will be proved true. We're here as guests. Once the princess has made her choice known, we ought to bless the couple and return peacefully."

"I'll have no objection to the princess choosing the most worthy among the assembled youths. But why should I tolerate a situation which I personally dislike? Don't I hail from a warrior dynasty?" asked Yudhajit.

"Old man, doesn't Prince Sudarshan also come of a warrior dynasty?" commented one of the princes. Some of them laughed. King Subahu appeared on the scene and said, "I had invited you all in keeping with the tradition of the swayamvara; but what I understand is, my daughter has already made her choice. For your information, her choice is Sudarshan."

Old Yudhajit frowned upon King Subahu and walked out haughtily towards his camp. Those who observed him met Prince Sudarshan and warned him against the old man's wrath.

"You've no kingdom, no army. How then will you stand against the vengeful old king? Better you depart," they advised him.

Sudarshan listened to them with humility and said, "I thank you for your goodwill. But I've come here in full

awareness of the dangers I might face. It is true I don't have any strength in terms of wealth or army. But I've a greater strength in my faith in the Divine Mother. Nobody can harm me if She will decide to protect me. It will be unworthy of my status as a prince to leave the assembly because of an unjust, unwise, arrogant old man's threat. It will be still more unworthy of me as a devotee to lose my faith in the supremacy of the Divine Mother's protection. So, I've decided to go through any ordeal."

"Bravo, O Prince! We wish you the best," said his well-wishers.

"I'm grateful to you for your sympathy for me. If I'm destined to die, no human help can stop my death. My father and grandfather died because they were destined to die. It is only the Divine Grace that can change human destiny," said Sudarshan.

The swayamvara took place the next day. Many of the assembled princes were unaware who would be the charming Sasikala's choice. And those who knew had their misgivings about the aftermath.

Accompanied by her maids, Princess Sasikala soon emerged from the palace. The guests were charmed by her beauty and graceful gait.

Suddently the princess stopped behind a pillar. King Subahu went near her and said, "My child, why do you stop here? Come into the hall. The princess will be introduced to you one by one. There are so many of them, all scions of illustrious dynasties." (*To continue*)



It would have been nice to see a tiger. We did not. But it did not really matter, for, what we were seeing and experiencing was as exciting as encountering the striped cat. We were in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, in Kerala, and we were taking part in some very creative eco-tourism activities.

Periyar is known for its elephants, gaur, tigers and of course, the Periyar lake on which boating is a definite part of a tourist's itinerary. Thousands of tourists come every year for these attractions. Unfortunately, most of them take a boat ride, demand to see elephants and tigers, and go back disappointed if they don't succeed. Some even blame the Park managers, the Forest Department, for not having elephants and tigers on call...as if these lords of the jungle can be summoned at will! Such tourists do not even walk into the forest, zooming in with their cars to the hotels, and walking up the tourist path to the boat jetty and back. Many even demand urban comforts like air-conditioning and concrete pathways, like bringing the city to the forest!

But if you want a different kind of visit to Periyar, the local tribal groups are ready to give it to you. We were fortunate that our friends in the Forest Department, knowing our interest in such activities, had put us in touch with these groups. There were groups with curious names,

In the Cand of the Invisible Tiger....

such as the Ex-Wayana Bark Collectors' Ecodevelopment Committee! We found that this group had members who had once been poachers, who were always on the run from Forest officials and police because they made their money by hunting animals and stealing valuable wood or bark. With help from Forest officials, they had taken to earning money in a legal and more dignified way, by guiding tourists through the Periyar forests. A number of other such groups have been set up by the Department and local people.

And so we went with tribal members of these groups on a hike through the peripheral forests of Periyar, to an island in the middle of the Periyar lake, and on a walk through an adivasi village. We were even taken on a night patrol, through forests and grasslands, our eyes and ears on high alert to detect any animal that may be hiding in the dark. Each of these activities was highly enjoyable, and also educational. Our tribal guides were excellent, detecting the slightest of movements that would turn out to be a spotted deer, or a barking deer, or during the night walk, a porcupine! They would point to plants, mentioning their local name, and telling us of the various uses that local people make of them...for medicines, as food, for making ropes, for converting into roofs or walls of houses, and for hundreds of other purposes. They showed us the traditional crops they grew (everywhere I was plucking green pepper and popping it into my mouth!). They also took us to a museum they have made, which shows the traditional medicinal practices, handicrafts, tools, and various other aspects of adivasi life.

The local officials told us that there were several

programmes of this kind, being managed by the adivasis. These included:

- A "dawn to dusk" hiking and rafting programme takes visitors through biodiversity-rich, scenic parts of Periyar, first on rafts made of bamboo, then a walk through the forest. This is one of the most popular of the ecotourism activities:
- A full day "border hike", which doubles as a sort of patrol on the edges of the tiger reserve, and covers some fascinating terrain from 900 to 1,300 metres above sea level.
- A "tiger trail", the longest of the activities, which consists of trekking and outdoor camping for one night and two days or two nights and three days. Daily treks can cover 20 to 35 km, so this is clearly for the tough, committed visitors! This activity comes with very interesting stories of the earlier days of the guides, who were poachers in their earlier avatar!
- A "jungle inn", where one can simply relax for the night, go for short walks in the day, and enjoy local cuisine.
- A "tribal heritage" walk, through a settlement of the Mannan adivasis. This includes a visit to the tribal museum mentioned above.

All these activities, are adventurous and enjoyable. But they also help to make tourists aware of conservation and of local people. Wildlife protection is being carried out along with meeting the needs of the local people, and involving such people in conservation.

At one point during our walks, we came across six women in a green uniform, who were walking purposefully

What you can do

If you are visiting a national park or wildlife sanctuary, or any forest area, remember:

- 1. Try to find a place to stay which helps the local people, rather than big tourism operators.
- 2. Try to talk to local forest guards, and local villagers, to get from them information and stories about the area. Were people thrown out when the park or sanctuary was set up, or were they involved in receiving benefits and managing the area?
- 3. Behave like a true guest; don't litter the forest, don't destroy plants or animals, and speak softly!

Try to find out if there are activities like what is described for Periyar above, in your own area or State.

through the forest. We were told that these women belonged to the "Vasant Sena", a group of over 100 women who have on their own been patrolling the forest! This was started by a few women a year ago, and quickly spread to many villages. When the Forest Department asked them why they are doing this, the women simply replied that forests are their future, and if they do not protect the forests, who else will?

Imagine, if we had gone in an air-conditioned car straight to our air-conditioned rooms in a hotel, and climbed into a boat to visit the Periyar reserve, would we have learnt any of this? Would we have seen so many

plants and animals and been able to hear local adivasi stories about these? And would we

have had the opportunity to pay our tourism money to the local people who desperately need the money, instead of to hotel owners who are already rich? We would not have been able to do any of this....but the ecotourism programme of Periyar allowed us to do this!

- Ashish Kothari Kalpavriksh Environmental Group





YOUNG CEO

In any corporate company, the post of Chief Executive Officer(CEO) is a coveted one. Would you believe that Suhas Gopinath, who launched a company three years ago, is its CEO, and he has made his company called Global's a successful venture? This Bangalore youngster was only 14 then. He acquired a contract from an American firm which was "outsourcing" its requirements. Suhas took up the challenge and he now runs the show with as many as 60 employees!



YOUNG AUTHOR

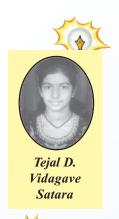
Children who exhibit a talent for writing are encouraged to write for their school magazines. They do participate in writing competitions run by magazines and their successful entries get published. There are also instances of children's written efforts getting published as books. Namita Manohar, a Fourth Standard student of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Calicut, is the proud author-illustrator of "Magical Stories". There are 17 stories in the collection, almost all of them with a

happy ending. She sent a copy to Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam who particularly liked "The Magic Fire", according to a communication the enterprising girl received from the President of India. Incidentally, Namita herself has designed every page in the book.

Young Super-Woman

Apsara is only 12 years and a student of Seventh Standard. This Chennai-based girl proved herself a super-woman when she dragged five motor cars, tied to one another and weighing a total of 4,800 kg, with her bare teeth along the Marina for nearly 60 seconds. The large crowd that had gathered on either side of the road cheered her superhuman effort. She did not stop with that feat. She balanced an iron rod against her chin and pushed

a single van forward for 47 seconds. She has won several prizes in boxing, fencing, and athletics even at this young age.





A DIFFERENT VIEW



Deviprasanna Behera Mayurbhanj

hanraj Seth was a very rich man in a big city. His son Guniraj was a clever and virtuous boy, befitting his name. Dhanraj wanted his son to see how the poor villagers lived. So both of them visited a nearby small village where they stayed with a very poor family for five days.

When they returned home, Sethji asked his son, "How was the trip, Guniraj?"

"Oh, it was wonderful, Father!" exclaimed Guniraj.

"Tell me, what did you learn from this visit?"
"I realised that while we have only one dog,

they have four dogs. In the front garden of our

house, we have a small pond, but they have a river nearby. Our garden has beautiful artificial lights, but the villagers have stars in the sky. Our mansion has a compound wall to mark our property limit, but their limit goes upto the horizon. We have a modest living area, but their fields are spread so far that one cannot see them in one glance. We have so many helpers who serve us and do our work. The villagers serve others. We buy foodgrains for our consumption. They produce the grain for their requirement. The walls of our house protect us. They have many friends in the village, who help them out in difficulties and problems. They protect them and share their worries."

Dhanraj Seth was stunned. He had expected something totally different from his son.

Guniraj told him, "Father, it was really nice of you to have taken me there to live amongst them and see for myself. Now I know how poor we are!!"

It is very important to know how we look at the world. Our expectations and ambitions can procure all the materialistic worldly pleasures and comforts. We can buy anything we want, but we cannot buy peace of mind, whenever we want it.



CHAMPAN'S STORYLAND



Champan lived in a jungle. He liked to sit under the tree near his house and read stories. He was very honest, kind and clever. Many birds and animals would flock to listen to his stories.

From the day the rabbit started telling stories to the birds and animals, the king of the jungle, the lion, found his court deserted. The foxes and wolves were jealous of the rabbit and so they did not go to listen to him.

One morning, the lion was wandering in the jungle. He saw the rabbit telling a story to a bird. When the story ended, the bird flew back to the tree and the rabbit went inside his house. As the lion was not aware of the story telling

sessions, he asked the bird about it. The bird told him everything. The lion was angry to know that just for listening to stories, the animals had left his court. He went to the leaders of foxes and wolves and asked them to help him bring the animals back. They planned to kill the rabbit.

The lion dressed himself as a sadhu and asked the wolves to spread the message that the sadhu wished to call the rabbit to give him blessings for a bright future. The monkey told this to Champan. As he was getting ready to go to the lion, the bird flew in to alert the rabbit about the lion's plan to kill him. Just then, one of the wolves knocked at the door. The rabbit said, "I shall come tomorrow, as it is now very dark." The bird told all the animals to leave the place by

morning, and all animals shifted to another jungle. There the rabbit became the king. And so the jungle came to be called Champan's Storyland.

Years passed. Champan now had two sons, Chaku and Chalu. They had the same qualities as their father but were too clever. They remembered what their father had told them about the lion.

One day, a lion cub came to play with them. They ran home and told their father, "Daddy,





today a cub came to play with us. We think he is the cub of the same lion you had told us about. Now he may attack us." Champan replied, "No, son, he cannot fight because he is old. So don't worry."

Next day,

the lion and his cub came to attack them. The cub did not know that his friends were his father's enemies. He got angry with his father and decided not to return home. The lion went away, ashamed of himself. When Champan came home, the lion cub told him what he had decided.

For many days, the lion did not fight with anyone because his son was with his enemies. Soon, he realized his mistake. He went to Champan's Storyland and asked

Champan,
"Can I be your friend
and live with you and listen
to your stories?" Champan
agreed. And they all lived happily
ever after.



Executive (over the phone to a hotel): Please send a full meal to my office.

Hotel Manager: Sorry, sir, we don't deliver meals to offices.

Executive: Why?

Manager: We undertake only home delivery.





Judge: You have a choice—either 10 days in jail or Rs 5,000.

Defendant: What a fantastic choice. I will take the money.

Cecil D'Cruz(10), Mumbai

TO EAT WITHOUT TY



ahil, what would you like to have for dinner?" Mrs. Mehra asked her 11-year-old son.

"Anything!" said Sahil without even looking up. Sahil was eating his lunch, eyes glued to the TV.

Mrs. Mehra was sad. Her son was a brilliant student. He was good at sports, too. But he had one weakness. At home Sahil would not eat his food without sitting in front of the TV. If he had to eat even a biscuit, the TV must be on. His parents ignored this habit in the beginning. Later, they

tried to make him understand by both coaxing and scolding, but Sahil somehow would not change himself.

At school, Sahil ate only a piece of sandwich or two, that too while playing football.

One day when Sahil's father came back late from office, he saw his son as usual sitting in front of the TV and eating his dinner. Sahil was not even aware of his father's arrival. So engrossed was he in the TV, Mr. Mehra was furious. An idea struck him. With the help of a TV mechanic, Mr. Mehra disconnected the TV.

The next day when Sahil came back from school and sat down to eat his lunch, to his horror, he found the TV not functioning. He fiddled a lot with the remote, the plug, and the switch, but nothing happened. "I'm not feeling hungry," he



told his mother.

In the evening, when Sahil went out to play, he was very hungry. But the thought of eating without the TV on was unthinkable.

When his father came home, Sahil told him about the TV not functioning.

Mr. Mehra, however, said, "I'm not feeling well today. We shall see tomorrow."

"How can you do this? You know I cannot eat without the TV? I did not eat my lunch, because there was no TV. And I'm very hungry now, but how will I eat?"

"If you're hungry, go and eat. I won't get the TV repaired today and that's final!" shouted Mr. Mehra.

Sahil looked at his mother for some support. She simply walked out of the room.



Deviprasanna Behera Mayurbhanj

Sahil walked around the house with a glum face. At dinner, he sat in front of his plate feeling very awkward. He once again tried telling his father about the TV. His father was very sympathetic this time. He asked Sahil at least to try and eat.

Sahil
looked at his plate. His
mother had made bhindi, dal
and chappati. Sahil was not
sure whether he liked to eat bhindi.
That was because Sahil never noticed
what he ate, so he didn't know how a
vegetable or the dal tasted. But today, when

he started eating bhindi, he liked it very much. Since he was enjoying his food, he ate well too.

Gradually, he realized that food can be eaten without looking at the TV. Not only that, he started talking to his parents—about his school, friends, and teachers—at the dinner table, something his mother had always wanted him to do. Sahil was very happy and so were his parents.

For Sahil as well as his parents it was an important change in his life.



A Surprise for Pooh

One day, Pooh the bear was in a happy mood. He sat near a hillock on the river bank to catch some fish. Mickey and Squirrel saw him. They made a plan and informed all their friends, silently. They hid themselves and prepared for action. Just then Squirrel gave a signal.

Piglet and Frog jumped down from the hillock. Tiger clapped his hands.

Ducklings got down into the river for swimming. Mickey and Owl came nearer Pooh by a floating log. Dragonfly sat beside him. Pooh wondered as to what was happening. But he checked himself immediately and invited him to a tea party. All the friends joined the party and enjoyed the day very well.

- Arunjyoti Sanyal (7), Jhangram

THE TREASURER'S POST



ikramsen was the King of Swarnapuri. It so happened that the treasurer of the kingdom died suddenly. Since it was an important post, the king wanted to appoint someone urgently for the post. At the same time, the post called for a person of talent, integrity and valour. The king found it difficult to choose the right man from amongst the many aspirants who vied for the post. At last, he entrusted the task to his chief minister.

After meticulous screening of the candidates, the chief minister chose two persons, namely Sunand and Vishal, whom he found were equally talented, knowledgeable and wise. But only one could be finally selected. The minister recommended their names to the king and both chalked out a plan to select the right man between the two.

Accordingly, the king called both of them and gave them each a bag full of gold coins. He told them, " Each bag contains a hundred gold coins. You take them with you and spend the night in our royal guest house. You bring back the hundred gold coins intact tomorrow morning to me."

Both took their bags and went to the guest house. During the night a bunch of dacoits suddenly descended on them and tried to rob them. Sunand and Vishal fought with them bravely, until all of them ran away except one who was caught and handed over to the king's guards.

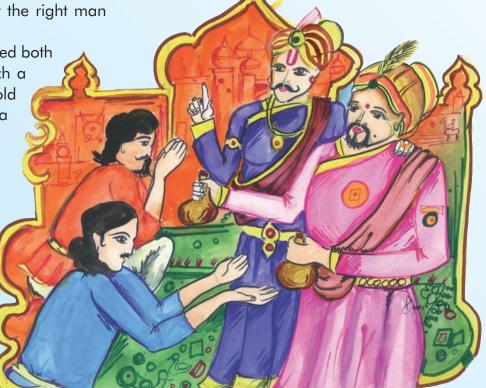
Next day, both Sunand and Vishal went to the king and narrated to him how they drove away the robbers and prevented them from taking away the bags. The king praised them for their



Punit J. Hiremuth Bangalore

bravery and asked his men to count the money in each bag. It was found that Sunand's bag contained exactly a hundred coins, whereas there were only ninety coins in Vishal's bag.

The chief minister smiled and said, "Your



majesty, I recommend Vishal to be appointed our treasurer."

On hearing this, Sunand was dismayed. He said, "This is totally unfair, O King! His bag was having only ninety coins."

The chief minister smiled again and replied, "Sunand, a treasurer should be not only wise,

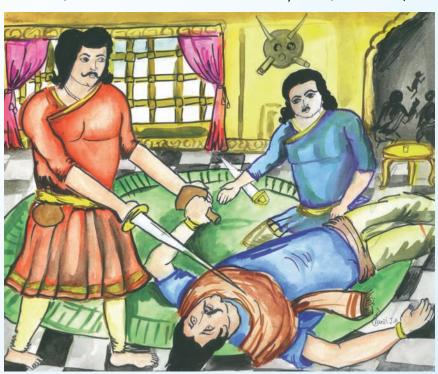
talented and brave, but also honest.

We had intentionally kept only ninety coins in each bag but told you to bring hundred coins intact.

You opened your bag in the guest house just to check whether there were

really a hundred coins and found only ninety coins. You had already doubted our statement and then you wanted to fake your honesty. You put ten coins in your possession and made it a hundred. Vishal had implicit faith in us and never attempted to test our statement. It shows his integrity. Besides all other merits which you have, Vishal has this very important trait also. That is why he has been selected."

Sunand left the place quietly. Vishal was appointed the treasurer and he discharged his duties to the best of his ability.



Teacher: When was Napoleon born?

Student: On his birthday.

- R. Nitthesh Raj (12), Bangalore

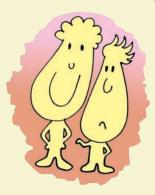




Neeraj: Why are you going round and round?

Praveen: Because I ate spin-ach.

- G.S.Anush(10), Oman



Prashant: Do you know Vivek has been made the monitor in our class? Raja: Is it so? Then who is the CPU?

- G.S.Anush(10), Oman

DREAM REALITY?

riya was a thirteen year old girl. She was extremely talented. She enjoyed reading novels which she borrowed either from her cousins or from her school library.

Priya's annual exams were over. She was extremely happy. She decided to borrow a good novel from the school library. But there were so many interesting novels that it really became difficult for her to choose from. Suddenly, she saw a book in one corner of the shelf. It had a bright cover. She hurriedly went and picked it up. She was thrilled and was filled with excitement. She hurried home. She couldn't wait long to read the book.

Munching her snacks slowly, she started reading. The book was really very scary. Suddenly a picture of a black hole appeared in front of her eyes. It was attracting her towards itself. In the blink of an eye she found herself in another world. There was darkness all over. She felt suffocating. There were strange people around her. They all had some or other kinds of defects. Some people were lame while others had their hands twisted. Priya really got scared.





Secunderabad

Seeing her, a strange old man approached. He was carrying an oxygen cylinder. Priya tried to run away but fell down and sustained a scratch on her knee. The man cried out, "Wait! Little girl. I want to help you. Here, take this." He held out a spare oxygen cylinder and gave it to Priya.

> At first she got frightened but then she was convinced that the man really wanted to help her. She then narrated her story to the old man. "Priya, this is your future world. You have landed into 23rd century."

"Really? Why is this world so strange?"

"We humans defied the laws of Nature. For our own benefit, we cut down the trees and built tall concrete towers. We polluted natural resources. All the fuels also got exhausted. In the name progress, we built



industries which increased pollution to a great extent. It enlarged the hole in the ozone layer. The ozone layer used to protect humans and all other living beings on the earth. But now the ultra violet rays of the sun affect us and we are living born with defects."

"Isn't there any solution for this problem?" asked Priya in a sad voice.

"No, now it's too late. Our end is near. Only you can help."

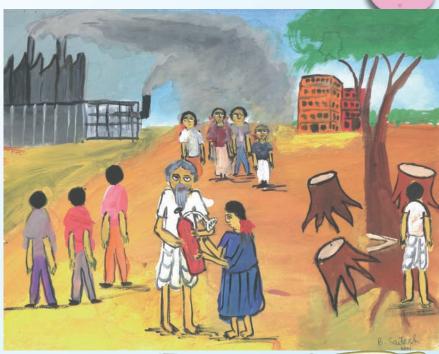
"But ..." before Priya could finish her statement, she heard a loud voice calling her.

Then suddenly she woke up to find that she had only fallen asleep. It was her mother calling. She went to the bathroom to wash her face. To her surprise, she noticed that her knee had a scratch.

Then, was it a reality? Was it a warning to the mankind from the

future world?

Maybe she would never know. But now, she does know how to save the world from destruction.



No work is high or low

During the American War of Independence, George Washington was made the head of the American army. One day, he was on his horseback, going round to see whether everything was fine. At one corner of the army camp, a building was being erected, and six workers were trying to lift a beam. It was very heavy, and it had to be taken to the top. The captain was shouting, "C'mon lift! Lift!"

George was unable to bear the sight. He dismounted and went up to the captain and said, "It's too heavy. Why don't you help them?"

"It's the soldiers' job," replied the captain.

George said, "Oh! I see!" He walked over and helped the soldiers. After the beam was placed in position, he came down and told the captain, "Well, my name is George. If you have any job like this or you fall short of men, send a message. I am head of the American army."

When the captain heard these words, he was shocked and felt ashamed of himself. Before he could speak a word, George Washington mounted his horse and rode away.

- P. Raghav Chaitanya (13), Hyderabad

HOW MITTU BECAME A HERO

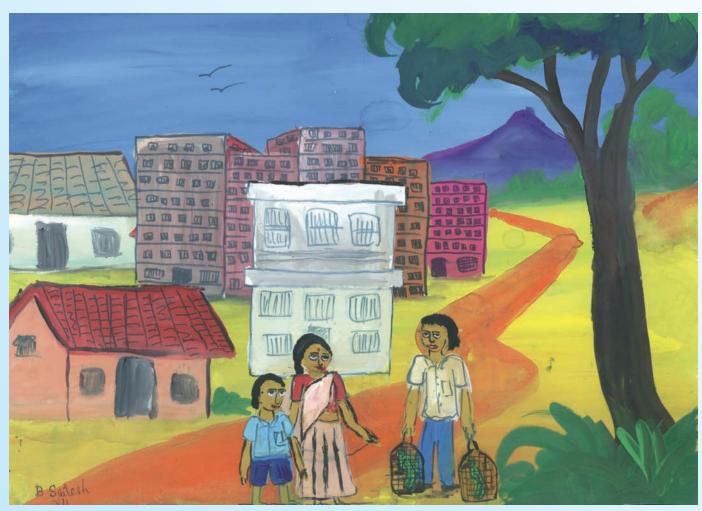


t was a fine, pleasant Sunday morning. A bird-seller was selling birds in the street. I like parrots very much and I wanted to buy one. My mother agreed. We both went outside and started selecting a parrot.

The bird-seller had many colourful birds, parrots, pigeons, parakeets. He showed us a parrot which was very bright green with a red beak. It looked very cute and attractive. We both liked it very much. The bird-seller told us that it was very talkative and it would prove a good

pet. We were surprised when the parrot said in a sweet voice, "Take me! Take me." We were excited and bought it at once. I called it Mittu and kept it on a rod hung in the middle of the hall in my house.

Next day trouble started. When I woke up I heard some bad words which had never been heard in our house. I was shocked that it was none other than Mittu speaking those words. My mother said, "It was making hell of a noise from the morning. I think it was in the company of





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bad people. It will take time to change its behaviour."

In the evening, I took Mittu to my friend Ramu's house. There Mittu created noisy scenes. It flew into their kitchen and messed it up. Mittu also began calling our

friends stupids and idiots. My friends laughed and were embarrassed. I felt really ashamed of Mittu's behaviour.

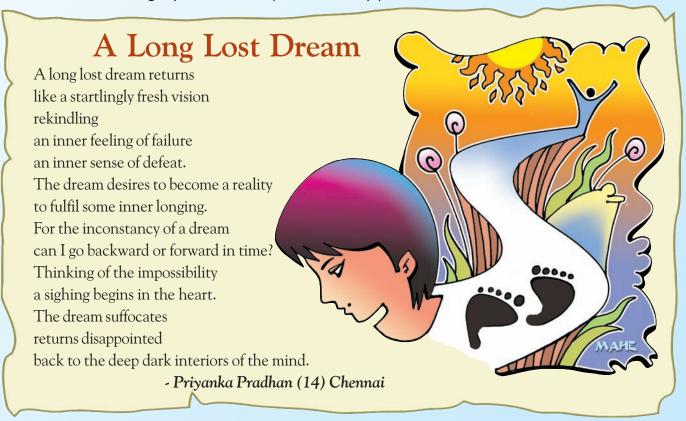
Mittu had the habit of frightening everybody by shouting 'fire-fire' and 'thief-thief'. One day when a guest came to our house, Mittu shouted, "Stupid, get out." We were all ashamed. After two days I told my mother, "I shall to return Mittu to the bird seller because my friends are not now playing with me." My mother said, "You must train Mittu as a good parrot." I said "Ok. I'll try my best." I and my friends decided to teach good words to Mittu.

The next day our friends went to Ramesh's birthday party. As usual Mittu followed us. Ramesh's house was gaily decorated. I put Mittu carefully on my shoulder. Now and then Mittu took chances to fly here and there. But I kept watching it carefully because Mittu was still mischievous. While it was perching on a showcase, it shouted suddenly 'Fire! Fire!' I said, "Shut up, Mittu, don't shout."

But Mittu did not stop and continued shouting after perching on my shoulder. I and my friend then looked upwards and saw fire on one of the decorated wires. We also started shouting, 'fire-fire'.

Ramesh's father heard our cries and quickly brought a wooden stick and switched off the mains. The fire was soon put out. Later, an electrician was brought, and power supply was restored.

All the guests and my friends praised Mittu for preventing a fire-accident. On that day Mittu became a hero. I felt proud of having Mittu as my pet.



MYSTERY ON THE MOUNTAIN



Kosalina Das Mayurbhanj

rshik, Arnab, Scott and Sehnaz were all worried. None of them had spoken a word for half an hour. The matter was rather very serious.

They had come to Bermura for trekking. On reaching the top of the hill, they found a large factory guarded by armed men. Moving a little ahead, they found some gun powder, a rusty rifle and some bullets. When they were going ahead, a tough looking man shouted at them. As soon as they heard his shouts, they ran for their lives. They sat in their camp at the foot of the hill and were very serious. At last Arnab said, "I think they are terrorists. We must inform the police. Nowadays the terrorists are very active. It

is possible that they had chosen a lonely place like Bermura to make their hide-out."

But Arshik, who was the most intelligent among the four, said, "No, we must gather some more information. Once we are damn sure that they are terrorists, we'll go and inform the police. I've a

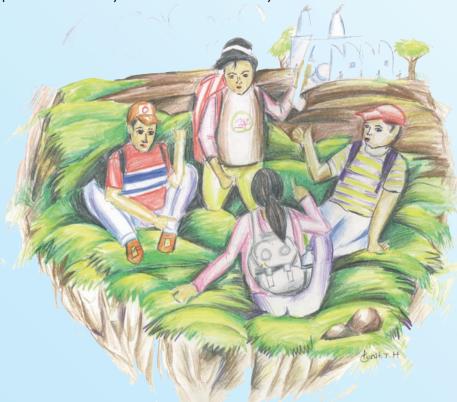


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plan. Tonight, Scott, Sehnaz and I'll go to the top; Arnab will stay at the foot of the hill. If we face any danger, we'll drop a red handkerchief and Arnab will then go and call the police." Arnab at first did not agree to stay alone. But Sehnaz convinced him.

At first Arshik climbed the hill, and then Scott and Sehnaz went up. They tiptoed to the entrance of the factory and went inside. After a while, they found a large open yard. Arshik whispered, "It must be a helipad." When they were moving forward, a guard saw them and chased them. The trio hid behind a bush. They heard conversation their and meanwhile they escaped from the place.

Reaching the foot of the hill, they went straight to the nearest police station. As soon as they saw the Inspector, they said at once, "Inspector Uncle, we've



seen a gang of terrorists." The Inspector was shocked. He was already astonished to see four children rushing to the police station late at night. Now he was more surprised.

He stammered, "Whe....re? Where have you found the terrorists?"

Arshik said, "They have set up a factory on

B e r m u r a hill." When the Inspector listened to their story, he burst out laughing.

A frightened Arnab whispered to the others, "I think this Inspector is part of the gang. Let's go from here."

At that time, the Inspector said, "They are not terrorists. The Government had set up a gun factory there last year. It has been kept secret from the people."

Now it was for the children to laugh aloud. After a hearty laugh, the Inspector heard the whole story and said, "But you children are very brave, indeed. You deserve a pat."

While returning to their camp, Scott said, "But this incident will be an unforgettable one for us." He laughed and the others joined him.



John: There's something I can do that nobody else in my school can, not even my teacher!

Jerry: What's that?

John: Read my handwriting.

- G.R. Venkatesh(12), Jaggayapet



Tourist (on way to railway station): If I take a shortcut through your fields, will I be able to catch the 3 O'clock train?

Farmer: Sure, and if my dog sees you, you might be able to catch even the earlier train.





My school van swirled and swirled before it reached Rhyme Land. I saw Little Miss Muffet being chased by a spider for her curd and whey.



When she came near the van, I asked her to get in. "But my curd and whey are with the spider!" she wailed. I said, "We can get them from old Mac Donald."



We went to his Farm House. We asked him, "Could we have some curd and whey?" He said they were not yet ready. He agreed to show us round.



We saw his cow farm, sheep farm and goat farm. He told us that he had two farm hands called Jack and his sister Jill, who would spill water whenever they fetched it.



Miss Muffet suggested a solution: "Let them spill the water on your plants." Mac Donald thanked her. We found Jill had fallen down injuring herself; and Jack was crying.



We took them in our van, which swirled and swirled and stopped in front of a palace. The guard told us it was Princess Cinderella's palace. He led us to her.



We told Cinderella that we had not sneaked in, but Jill had hurt herself. She said, "My cousin Princess Snow White knows the best doctors in Fairy Tales Land."



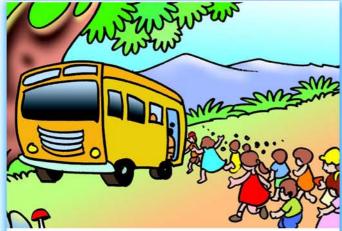
Cinderella sent us there in her chariot. I was worried about our van. Cinderella sprinkled water on the van and it followed us. We told Snow White why we had come.



Snow White called a ten year old girl called Alice who lived in Hospital Land. Later, we took her in our van. She wanted us to free some children from her stepmother.



When we reached the stepmother's house, we saw some children in a room, crying. We opened a window and asked them to climb up and come out.



The children were happy that we had gone there to rescue them. They came out and got into our van. We followed them before anybody could see us. The van started.



It began to swirl and swirl. Suddenly, the van honked loudly. I was sitting near the window and I woke up. It was all a dream. I was glad that I was among my friends.

LESSON FROM A DREAM

ey! Don't beat it. What harm did the dog do to you? Why're you beating the dog?" asked Raju's younger brother, Gopal. Raju had the habit of beating dogs and puppies and throwing stones at them. He also had the bad habit of catching dragonflies and butterflies and tying threads to their wings. At school also Raju usually caught hold of dragonflies and butterflies in his handkerchief which suffocated them. His classmates used to tell him not to harm the insects.

His younger brother Gopal would complain to his mother about his acts. His mother asked angrily, "Raju, why are you playing cruelly with the flies? If you continue such acts, you'll get severe punishment." Raju merely laughed and said, "Mummy, they are silly creatures. How can they punish me?"

His mother replied, "Don't laugh. One day you'll be punished by God." Yet Raju did not take heed to her words. He merely said, "Good night" and went to bed.

The next morning, when he woke up, he found something strange. His hands were missing. He now started crying. With great difficulty Raju managed to get up. He cried, "Mummy look at me!"

"Hey, you really have no hands! Where have they gone?" exclaimed Gopal. His mom said, "I had warned you several times for your recklessness and cruelty. Now look at yourself. I think you've been punished by God."

Raju reached his school with the help of Gopal. His classmates laughed and teased him. He was unable to do any work on his own. It was very painful for him. On his way home, dogs and puppies chased him. He somehow escaped from them and reached home with great difficulty. Even flies frightened him; he was unable to drive them away.

Raju now started thinking of all the creatures he had harmed. He said to himself, 'How they



would have been hurt when they were injured.' Then Raju firmly decided not to harm any creatures in future. He swore in the name of God. He told this to his mother before he went to bed. When he woke up the next morning he found his hands. "Oh! My hands are back! My hands are back!" he started shouting. "Raju, wake up! Wake up!" Somebody was shaking Raju.

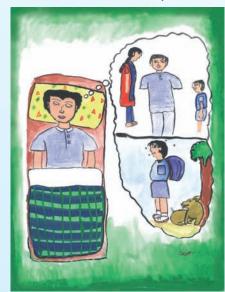
He opened his eyes. All his family members stood in front of him with curious faces. Raju thought, "Oh! It was all a dream, not real." He heaved a sigh of relief. He narrated his dream to his parents and said, "Mom, I've learnt a lesson from my dream." His parents felt happy.

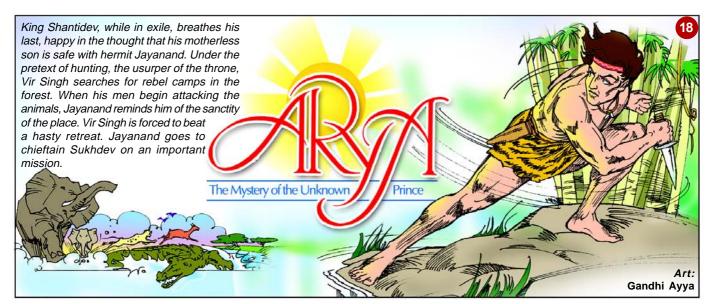


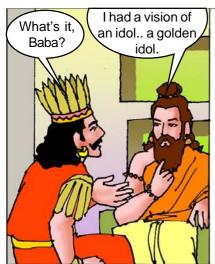


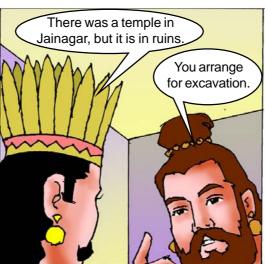


Harini Venkataraman Chennai





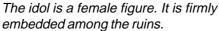










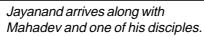


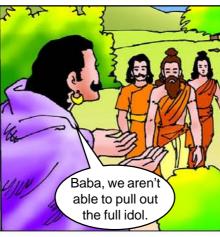


Sukhdev approaches the divine figure with great reverence.

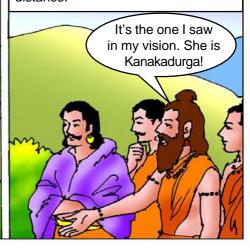


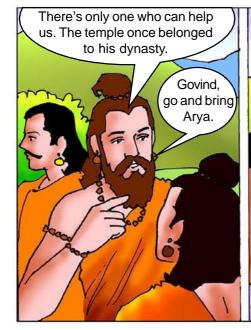






Jayanand looks at the idol from a distance.

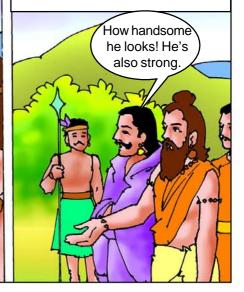


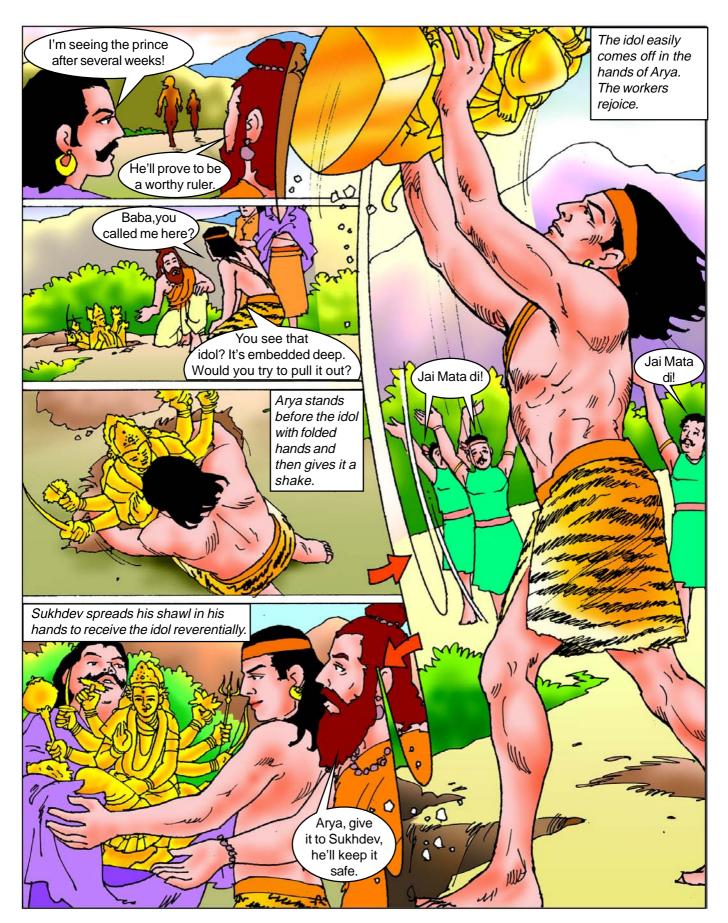


Let's first put up a small temple and start worship Till then the idol must be in a safe place.

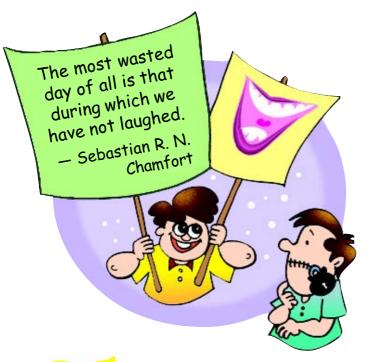


They see Govind escorting Arya.









The medical lecturer turned to one of his students and

said: "Now Rohan, it is clear from this X-ray that one of this patient's legs is much shorter than the other. This accounts for the patient's limp. But what would you do in a case like this?

Rohan thought for a moment, then said brightly, "Well, sir, I should imagine that I would limp, too."

Laugh till you drop!

Avinash watched her mother remove the cream from her face.

"What's that for, Mom?" he asked

"That's to make me beautiful."

"Didn't work, eh?"

യുതയു

Teacher: Bunty, why are you late to the class?

Bunty: I helped an old lady to cross the road.

Teacher : Good, but did it take you so long?

Bunty: The point is she don't want to cross

the road.



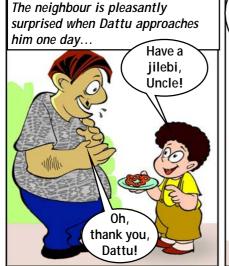
Raju: Suresh, Your father is a teacher, but your

elder sister don't know a letter to read.

Suresh: So what? Your father is a dentist and your little brother don't have a single tooth.



Dushtu Dattu







PUZZLE DAZZLE

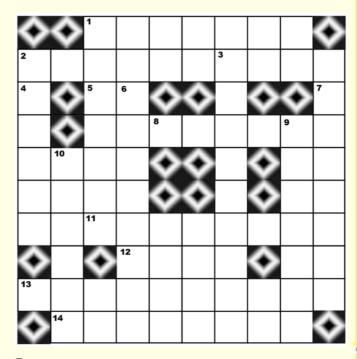
ALL ABOUT BIRDS



All of us enjoy bird-watching.
Here is a crossword on birds.
Some of the clues will add to your
knowledge on birds.

CLUES Across:

- 1. A small, restless, active, arboreal woodland bird, which is chiefly olive brown, grey or white in colour (7).
- 2. An arboreal bird which spends most of the time in climbing tree trunks and branches, with the help of its short, stiff tails (10).
- 8. Large, conspicuous wetland bird, better known generally than perhaps any other group, and hunted universally (4).
- 11. A domestic breed extensively exploited for carrying messages, prior to the advent of wireless telegraphy (6).
- 12. Arboreal, chiefly nocturnal birds of prey. It belongs to the Strigidae family (4).
- 13. A small restless olive-green bird with whitish underparts, a rust coloured crown and two elongated pin-pointed feathers in the tail which is carried jauntily cocked (10).
- 14. Most familiar bird having ashy grey-brown above streaked with blackish and rufus, and with a pale fulvous supercilium; fulvous ashy white below (7).



Down:

- It is well known for its habit of brood-parasitism, not building nests, but laying its eggs in the nests of other birds (6).
- 4. Large, long legged, terrestrial birds superficially resembling storks (5).
- 5. It is also referred to as "New Zealand flightless bird" (4).
- 6. Predaceous birds belonging to the family Accipitridae, which also includes the eagles and Old World vultures (4).
- 7. Brightly coloured arboreal fruit and grain eating bird. Many species can be trained to imitate a few words of human speech in captivity (6).
- This species performs an effective and useful function as one of nature's "garbage collectors" (7)
- This largest of passerine birds belongs to the Corvidae family. (4).
 By R Vaasugi

Answers: Across: 1. Titmice, 2. Woodpecker, 8. Duck, 11. Pigeon, 12. Owls, 13. Tailor Bird, 14. Sparrow.

Down: 3. Cuckoo, 4. Crane, 5. Kiwi, 6. Hawk, 7. Parrot, 9. Vulture, 10. Crow.

THE SEVENITIONY

LEGENDS FROM OTHER LANDS (FRANCE)



Little over two thousand years ago a charming mansion stood over a hillock at the farthest end of the city known as Brittany. Beyond the hillock was the sea, marked by dark rocks half submerged. Some of them looked like giant swords pointed at the clouds and some of them looked like huge maces. Once in a while, in a stormy night, a ship would dash against those rocks and be destroyed.

A beautiful young woman, Dorizen by name, could be seen looking into the vast sea, seated near her window in the mansion, for hours at a stretch. She would then heave a sigh and leave the spot, only to come back again after a while.

Was she in love with the sea? Rather she was afraid of the sea – the dangerous shore in

particular. Her adventure-loving husband, Arbor, had undertaken a voyage to some distant island. She had the fear that while coming ashore, his ship might lose the way and strike against one of those hidden rocks.

Though her husband's to and fro journey was expected to last one year at the most, two years had passed and there was no news of him. Nobody said so, but people took Arbor and his companions as lost in the sea because of a shipwreck, if not killed by bandits on the islands they visited or by pirates in the sea.

A very wealthy young man called Aurelius, who had once proposed to Dorizen before her marriage, now revived his proposal and pestered her with repeated requests to marry him, now that Arbor was no more. Dorizen hated him, but he was an aristocrat and a young man of great influence and that is why she could not be rude to him beyond a limit.

"My dear Dorizen, there is nothing I cannot sacrifice for you, there is nothing I cannot do for you, only if you agree to marry me," he said one day, as Dorizen stood inside a temple. The lady decided to snub the young man for good in such a way that he would never be able to show his face before her in the future.

"Well, Mr. Aurelius, there is nothing you cannot do in order to marry me, is that so? Thank you. Now, can you remove all the rocks that stand in the water along our shore?" she asked.

"Why not!" replied Aurelius quite enthusiastically. "But promise that you will marry me within seven days of my achieving that feat," said he.

"I promise," said Dorizen in the spirit of warding off a nuisance.

"By the way, I need not remind you of the fact that whatever is the promise made inside this temple must be honoured. Otherwise all the members of the family of one who breaks the promise will suffer eternal hell. Even the souls of their forefathers will face the same fate!" Dorizen had

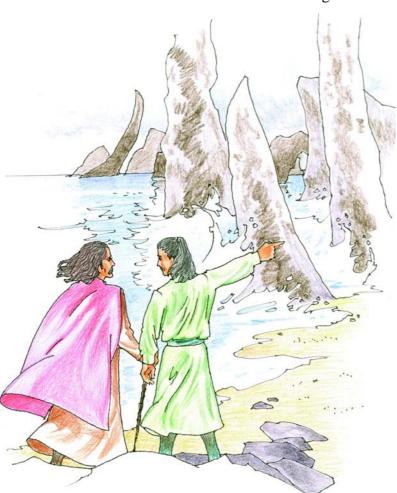


forgotten all about that belief which went strong in the region. She was for a moment disturbed. But when she remembered that no human being could fulfil the condition she had laid, she smiled and went her way.

But the smile disappeared from the face of Aurelius. How was he going to perform the impossible? He thought and thought and scratched his head and consulted his confidents on the issue. "Are you crazy? Don't you see that she just wished to avoid you for good?" they said.

This made Aurelius even more adamant. She wished to hoodwink him, did she? He must oblige her to marry him.

One of his friends indulged in black magic. From him he learnt about a wizard living in a



distant cave a thousand miles away. Aurelius drove his carriage for days and met the wizard and brought him to Brittany. The wizard surveyed the dangerous shore and said, "It should be possible for me to create an illusion so that the rocks would become invisible for seven days."

"Excellent! That should serve my purpose!" exclaimed Aurelius. The wizard did some abracadabra and, indeed, the giant rocks seemed to have clean disappeared!

Aurelius ran up the hillock and called out for Dorizen. But the one to respond to his call was Arbor! He had come back while Aurelius had gone to find the wizard.

"Hello, my friend Aurelius, how are you? I heard all about your promising to do away with the rocks. It was a good joke. It was kind of you to bring some relief to Dorizen during my long absence," said Arbor, asking Aurelius to come in and relax in his mansion.

"What do you mean by joke? Look at the sea!" spoke Aurelius gravely.

Meanwhile Dorizen too had come out. Both Arbor and she looked at the sea. To their utter amazement they saw all the rocks vanished—without leaving any trace of them! They looked pale. Dorizen

fainted. But the moment she revived, Aurelius demanded that she must marry him, now that he had performed the impossible.

"Alas, dear Dorizen, one's commitment to truth is much more valuable than one's life. I would not like even the souls of our forefathers to suffer hell because of our breach of promise," gravely said Arbor.

Dorizen stood still, no better than a statue. Then she recollected herself and said, "I had promised to marry you within seven days of the disappearance of the rocks. I will do so on the seventh day itself, not a day earlier." Aurelius could not object to her decision. After all the illusion will continue for seven days! On the seventh day, after their marriage, he planned to move

to another town with Dorizen, far away. She will never know that the rocks were really there; only it seemed that they were not there.

The sky was cloudy for the past few days. As if all the collected clouds burst forth on the seventh day, accompanied by a terrible wind. People could not come out of their homes. There was no human movement in the town; only Nature's fury moved trees and poles and carriages and what not. There was no question of any priest being available for performing a marital ritual in any temple. So many times Aurelius tried to come out to the street in order to fetch his 'bride', but the wind upturned his carriage. His horses neighed in panic and backed away.

Thus passed the seventh day. Next day the sky was clear and Aurelius appeared in front of the mansion on the hillock, still hopeful of achieving his end, hopeful of leading Dorizen to the temple and marrying her before the rocks had reappeared.

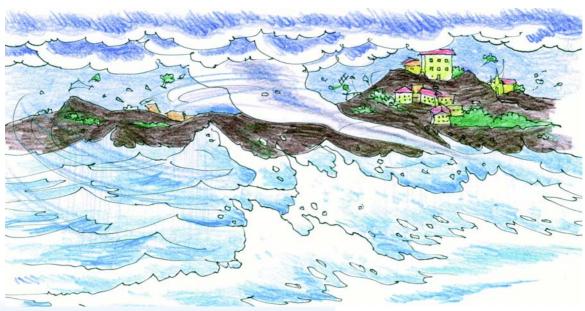
Dorizen was ready. Arbor bade her a tearful goodbye. Indeed, she stepped out of her mansion into the open.

But Aurelius was looking awfully nervous. Before the power of truthfulness radiated by Dorizen and Arbor, he trembled, for he had only taken recourse to falsehood; the rocks had not really been removed.

A lightning struck and a terrific sound of thunder shook the seashore. They all looked in that direction. Lo and behold, the rocks were there as they had been there for thousands of years! The illusion had ended!

Aurelius fainted. Arbor and Dorizen called their servants and took care of the young man till he recovered his senses. But once he had done that, he bowed to Arbor and Dorizen. "Pardon me, pardon this sinner!" he cried out and ran away. He was never seen in Brittany again.

(M.D.)



LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI

- A PEEP INTO HIS CHILDHOOD

Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru as India's second Prime Minister in 1964, was born a hundred years ago. The year 2004-2005 will witness year-long birth centenary celebrations. Lal Bahadur Shastri remained Prime Minister for only 20 months, before he had a premature end on January 10, 1966. We pay our humble tribute to this great leader, by recalling some incidents from his childhood which throw light on his character and upbringing. We feel this account will enrich the content of this year's Children's Special. - Editor

al Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904, at Mughalsarai, a small railway town in Uttar Pradesh. He was inducted into the Nehru ministry, and held important portfolios like Railways; Transport and Communications; Commerce and Industry; and Home. He embodied such virtues as boldness, love of adventure, patience, self-control, courtesy, and selflessness. He had inculcated all these virtues even in his childhood.

Lal Bahadur lost his father, a school teacher, when he was only 18 months old. He was sent to live with an uncle in Kashi where he could attend high school. He was affectionately called Nanhe, the 'little one', at home. He would walk many miles to school, even when the streets burned in the summer heat.

An interesting incident took place when he was only three months old. His mother went to bathe in the holy Ganga with her child. In the crowd at the bathing ghat, the baby slipped from his mother's arms and fell into a cowherd's basket. The cowherd, who had no children, took the baby as a divine gift. Soon the police traced the child. The foster parents wept bitterly when they had to hand over the child. Lal Bahadur, who might have become a cowherd, was, however, destined to head the government!

Courage and self-respect were two virtues which took deep root in him early in life. While in Kashi, one day he went with his friends to visit a fair on the other bank of the Ganga. While returning, he had no money for the boat fare. His self-respect would not allow him to ask his friends for money. So, he quietly slipped from their company. His friends did not notice his absence, and boarded the boat. When it had moved away, Lal Bahadur jumped into the river. While his friends watched breathlessly, he swam to the other bank safely.

Though Lal Bahadur was a man of small build, he was unusually strong. His moral strength was even greater. An incident which took place when he was six years old seems to have left a deep mark on his mind. Once he



went to an orchard along with his friends. He was standing below while his friends climbed the trees. The gardener came and saw Lal Bahadur plucking a flower. The boys on the trees climbed down and ran away. The gardener caught Lal Bahadur and beat him up severely. He wept. The gardener, who recognised him, smiled with pity and said, "As you are an orphan, my boy, you must learn better behaviour." The words of the gardener had a great effect on him. He swore, "I shall behave better in future, because I'm an orphan."

Three events during his ministerial career stand out as a testimony to his strong-willed character. When he was Railway Minister, there was an accident in Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu in which more than 140 passengers lost their lives. He did not lose time to own moral responsibility for the disaster and tendered his resignation.

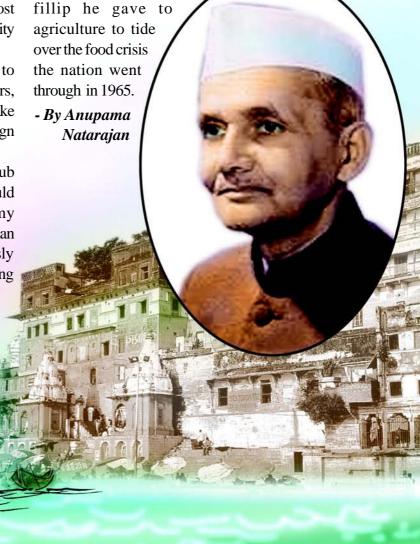
In 1963, Congress President Kamaraj wanted to strengthen the party and suggested that the top leaders, including those serving in the Union Cabinet, should take up party work. Lal Bahadur Shastri was the first to resign and offer his services to the party.

In 1965, the military ruler of Pakistan, Gen. Ayub Khan, thought that India was vulnerable and he could engineer an armed conflict. The Pakistan army encroached into the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. The Indian army was caught unawares; Pakistan simultaneously started incursions in the Kashmir area. The peace-loving

Prime Minister Shastri was not prepared to take it lying down. He gave permission to the Indian army to give a befitting reply. At the end of the 22-day war, Pakistan found that it had been mauled badly.

Lal Bahadur Shastri suffered a fatal heart attack a few hours after signing a historic peace treaty between India and Pakistan in Tashkent on January 10, 1966. His body was brought back to India. A memorial, called Vijay Ghat, was built in his honour. An inscription there says: "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" ("glory to the Soldier, glory to the Farmer"), a slogan the late Prime Minister coined in the wake of the India-Pakistan

war and a reminder of the



READ AND REACT

A NOVEL CONTEST FOR READERS

Cash prize of Rs. 250 for the best entry



Read the story below:

Old Jagannath lost his son and daughter-in-law in an epidemic. The responsibility of bringing up the two grandsons fell on him. He wanted them to grow up as decent young men. He sought the advice of his friend Jagmohan. He told Jagannath, "Let me talk to them." He called the boys. "Think well before you answer my question," he told them. "If god were to appear before you and ask you what boon you would like to have to lead a happy life, what will you tell him?"

The boys gave their replies. Jagmohan turned to his friend and said, "You heard them, didn't you? When the time comes, you give your house and farm to the elder one. Don't worry about the younger grandson. He'll thrive wherever he goes."

Before you react, consider these questions:

- What, do you think, were the answers given by the grandsons?
- What was the basis of Jagmohan's advice to Jagannath? Your reaction in 100-150 words must be convincing. Give a title and mail your entry in an envelope marked "Read and React". Entries received after the closing date will not be considered.

CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED

82 Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.



STAR TROUBLE

K arimullah was the astrologer at the Caliph's court. He was fat and stout and every time he moved it looked as if he was rolling along merrily. "He has no back. He has no front. He is just a blob of fat, well rounded and shaped into a sphere. He rolls along merrily, and the stars and the planets roll along with him. That's how he knows what the future has in store for every person on the earth," a few friends joked.

Others noticed his bald top and talked of him as the Bald Eminence. A few who thought he was a sham called him the Bad Eminence.

However, Karimullah was not bothered. Didn't he enjoy the patronage of the Caliph?

He came to the capital two decades back, unknown and uninvited. He set up a dingy shop in the main bazaar. He sat in his shop, twiddling his fingers, all day long. Some days, a client or two turned up. On other days, nobody came to him. He hardly earned enough to live. Yet he did not give up. He stuck to the chosen profession.

Many were the predictions he made for the few clients who went to him. Most of them turned out to be wrong. The clients whom he had failed did not speak about him. Why tell the whole world that a slick talker had fooled them!

But a few of his forecasts did come true. Those who benefited by his predictions sang his praise. They became his champions. By word of mouth, his fame spread. More and more clients came to him. He learnt how to play safe. He predicted good times while dropping hints about evil forces that might make things a little hard, at times. He left enough room to interpret his words differently in case his predictions did not come true. With time, he became a master in the art of prediction. He knew how to mix the good with the bad so that he could always argue that he had foreseen the future correctly. Of course, he demanded high fees.



Soon, the Caliph sent for Karimullah and asked him to tell what the future held for him. The astrologer spoke of prosperity for the land. He then remembered that almost every year the crops had failed in some part of the nation. That gave him a bright idea. He told the Caliph of possible drought hitting a section of the land. "But, O Great Ruler! You would have enough in the granary to feed the people," he added.

The Caliph was immensely pleased. He appointed Karimullah the court astrologer. The Caliph had complete faith in the astrologer. He often told his courtiers, "He knows how to read the future. Maybe, the stars are his friends. They confide in him. Rarely does his prediction go wrong."

"The future is not ours to see," Karimullah would explain seeing danger in such high praise.

"But you have never gone wrong," the Caliph said smiling at Karimullah.

"I'm lucky. Just plain lucky! Will my luck last forever!" the astrologer scratched his bald top.

"How can your luck ever fail you? The stars are your friends."
The Caliph laughed off his fears.

Karimullah laughed with the Caliph. But, deep within, he sensed danger. Suppose he failed in his prediction? Would the Caliph then laugh it off? Or would he fly off into a rage and punish him? He had seen powerful courtiers fall from grace. Often the fault was not theirs. But the Caliph had the final word. Many of them ended up in prison. A few of them even lost their heads.

Nobody at the royal court knew what the next day held for him. Not even Karimullah.

One evening, the Caliph sent for the astrologer. Karimullah came, salaamed and took his seat.

"Tell me, my friend, what the weather would be like tomorrow?"

That was not a hard task. The sky had been clear for about ten days. He had not seen a single star cloud in the sky. The days were not hot, either. Those facts emboldened him.

"O Noble Ruler! I see a clear bright day. Not very hot. Ideal for outdoor activities," he grinned.

"Thank you. It is quite some time since I went for a hunt. Tomorrow seems ideal. Would you care to join me?" the Caliph peered at the astrologer.

"As you wish, O Noble Ruler!" Karimullah spoke softly.

"We meet tomorrow at seven," the Caliph was curt. Karimullah knew that it marked the end of the meeting. He rose, bowed and departed.

The morning turned to promise a fine sunny day. Karimullah noted it and felt happy. He rode his donkey to the Royal Court. Its back sagged in the middle under the heavy weight. Its belly hardly stayed inches above the ground. It just about wobbled its way to the Royal Palace. Finally he joined the hunting party.

The party set out for the forest.

On the way, the party came across a farmer riding his donkey.

The farmer noticed the Caliph and his men. He drew to the side of the road, quickly got off the donkey, came down on his knees and kissed the ground paying homage to the

"Ah, my dear old man! How are you?" the Caliph asked.

ruler.

"Things can't be better, O Lord, when you are there to protect us," the man replied. Then he saw the Caliph's outfit and took a deep breath.

"Anything the matter with you?" the Caliph asked.

"Today is not the right one for hunting, if I may dare to say," he drawled.

"Why?" the Caliph hissed.

"Because it will rain, for sure," the farmer replied.

 $\hbox{``Did you hear him?'' the Caliph turned to Karimullah.}\\$

"Trust me, O Noble Sire!" Karimullah was sure of himself. There was no sign of any cloud anywhere in the sky.

The Caliph gave the farmer a stern stare and set his mount on the trot.

A couple of hours later, the party reached the forests. Suddenly dark clouds appeared out of nowhere. The sky opened up. It rained heavily. Karimullah had predicted a sunny day. But the farmer had foreseen a rainy day.

"Tell me, what does the future hold for you?" the Caliph exploded, in anger.

Karimullah spluttered. But he could not say a word. The Caliph turned to the guards and said, "Take him to the dungeon. Tomorrow we shall decide his fate." Karimullah fell at the feet of the Caliph. But the men chained him and dragged him away. He held the bars of the prison and stood for long, wondering what the future held for him. He might even lose his life. Who could save him?

He then thought of his friend Mulla Nasruddin. If only Nasruddin knew of his plight! But how would Nasruddin get the message? His face lit up when he found a gold mohar in the folds of his dress. He tipped one of the guards to convey a message to Nasruddin. The guard came back and assured the prisoner that Nasruddin would be present at the Court and that he would try to save him.

Next morning, Karimullah was dragged to the Caliph's presence. Nasruddin was at the Court. The farmer, who had predicted rain, was also present.

Karimullah's face fell when he noticed him.

The Caliph arrived. Everyone stood up and bowed.

"Have you any last wish, you wretch?" the Caliph spat out at Karimullah.

Karimullah did not miss the meaning. The Caliph had sentenced him to death. He choked with feelings. He could not say a word.

Mulla Nasruddin stood up. "Oh Lord! Karimullah has told me his last wish."

"Out with it. Nasruddin," the Caliph turned to the Mulla.

"Oh Noble Sire, he has always said that the best astrologer has his feet firmly on the ground," Mulla Nasruddin spoke softly.

"I too had thought of The farmer that. predicted rightly. He

should be the court astrologer," the Caliph held his head high.

"Pardon me, My Lord! The farmer has only two feet on the ground. But his donkey has four feet on the ground."

"Have you gone mad, Nasruddin?" the Caliph exploded.

"Pardon me, My Lord! But I know the farmer can't forecast anything. Not even the weather."

"But he did yesterday," the Caliph recounted.

"Thanks to his donkey," said the Mulla.

"Is that true?" the Caliph enquired of the farmer.

"Yes, O Great One! I don't know when it will rain and when it won't. Only my donkey knows how to read the weather."

"Donkey?" the Caliph was evidently astonished.

"Yes, My Lord! When it's going to be fine weather, the donkey carries its ears forward. But even my donkey goes wrong some times," the farmer explained.

"To err is human," Nasruddin spoke clearly.

"Sometimes the stars think that man is a donkey and play dirty tricks on him. So, why blame poor Karimullah?" Nasruddin lowered his voice and added, "My Lord! He may not be always accurate, but he is the best astrologer in this land."

> The Caliph thought of it. He knitted his eyebrows. The courtiers waited in silence. Finally he burst into laughter. "So the stars did you in, Karimullah! Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.

I don't want that to be said of stars, too."

Karimullah could not believe his ears. Nasruddin had pulled him out of the jaws of death. Thanks to Nasruddin, he would live to see many

more dawns. - By R.K.Murthi



- By Rosscote Krishna Pillai



November born - MARIE CURIE

She was born poor as the youngest child of a teacher couple. By sheer dint of intellectual brilliance, perseverance, courage and unflinching dedication to her life's goal, she became one of the greatest achievers in science. The only scientist to win two Nobel Prizes, one for Physics and the other for Chemistry, Madame Curie remains the greatest woman scientist ever.

Born on November 7, 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, then under Russian domination, Manya Sklodowska lost her mother when she was young. Her father was thrown out of his job by the Russians. Manya took up the job of a governess to run the family and save money for her own higher education.

In 1891 she managed to join the famous Sorbonne University in Paris to study physics. She graduated in 1893 with top honours. Next year with a scholarship from Poland, she graduated in mathematics in second place.

In July 1895 she married Pierre Curie, a French chemist, working in Sorbonne, who became her devoted partner in scientific research.

Eight years of painstaking reserch brought the scientist-couple the most deserving Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903 along with another famous scientist, Becquerel, who had earlier discovered the radiation of uranium. It was Marie Curie(as she was by now known) who coined the term "radioactivity" for the process of radiation by metals.

The Curies added a glorious chapter to the history of science with their discovery of two new radioactive elements, Polonium(named after Poland) in July 1898 and Radium in December that year. Madame Curie had earlier discovered that thorium, the rare earth element, also emitted radiation.

The Curies worked in a rickety, dilapidated, ill-equipped "old wooden shed with a leaky roof and very inadequate heat". During those four years, they had also to take care of their daughter, Irene, born in 1897. (She too later became a famous scientist and won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry along with her husband, Frederic Jolio, in1935.)

When in 1906 Pierre was fatally run over by a horse carriage, Marie succeeded him as the first woman-professor in Sorbonne. In 1911, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her discovery of polonium and radium. On July 4, 1934 she died at the age of 67 of leukaemia caused by her continuous exposure to radioactivity.

Madame Curie became a classic example of a person's commitment to "to perform one's duty in life without ever aspiring to enjoy oneself the benefits of its result."

The largest animal ever

t is not the elephant or the rhinoceros or even the extinct mammoth that lords it over all the inhabitants of the earth in size; it is the blue whale; its weight of about 200 tonnes equals the weight of about 35 adult elephants or about 2,500 humans. The tongue of the blue whale weighs as much as an adult elephant.

The average length of a blue whale is 27.4m; the longest measured specimen is 34 m. But the longest creature on earth is not the blue whale; it belongs to a species of a ribbon worm, named *Lineus longissimus*, which measures up to an unbelievable 54 m. The heart of a blue whale has the size of a small car; it circulates 7,500 litres of blood. The baby of the animal grows at the rate of 4.5 kg an hour and drinks half a tonne of its mother's milk a day.

Despite its huge size, the blue whale feeds on tiny phytoplankton and small fish and filters out three to four tonnes of the consumed food a day. A blue whale in its life eats about 10,000 tonnes of krill, a shrimplike plankton; it sucks in 40-45 tonnes of water in one gulp.

As the whale's eye-balls are fixed, it has to turn its entire body when it wants to change its line of sight. Whales communicate with each other through a variety of pleasant sounds which are referred to by humans as whalesong. Reportedly, they also snore and dream.

Science Quiz

- Who invented the hovercraft?
 a.Edison; b.Karl Benz; c.Cockerel;
 d.Daimler
- Which living animal has the heaviest brain?
 a.elephant; b.rhinoceros; c.octopus;
 d.sperm whale
- 3. Who discovered the organic chemical benzene?
 a.Faraday; b.Humphry Davy; c.Berzelius; d.Gay-Lussac
- 4. Who systematized geometry?
 a.Pythagoras; b.Riemann; c.Euclid;
 d.Archimedes
- 5. Who invented the mercury barometer in 1643?
 a.Galileo; b.Torricelli; c.Kelvin; d.Pascal

Answer: 1) c.Cockerel 2) d.sperm whale 3) a.Faraday 4) c.Euclid 5) b.Torricelli



Genius of Ramanujan

The late G.H.Hardy, the famous mathematician who discovered the genius in the world-renowned Indian

mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan, recalls one of the many occasions when he experienced the spark of the young scientist's astonishingly brilliant intellect.

Hardy says: "I remember once going to see him when he was lying ill at Putney. I had ridden in taxi-cab No. 1729 and remarked that the number seemed to me rather a dull one, and that I hoped it was not an unfavourable omen. "No," he replied, "it is a very interesting number; it is the smallest number expressible as a sum of two cubes in two different ways."

The Arabian Nights: VERSE AND WIT



The Arabian Nights: VERSE AND WIT





Treaty of Versailles

Dawn was still three hours away. The Forest Campiegne railway station in Versailles lay in a shroud of darkness. A part of the woods that stood close to the railway station caught glimmers of light. The light came from a well-furnished rail carriage that temporarily housed Marshal Foch and his close advisers and also the German delegates who had sought an end to hostilities. The calendar on the table still showed the date as November 10, 1918. Nobody gave a thought to that. Whoever changed a calendar at midnight? That had to wait for the dawn, though November 11 had already arrived.

Germany had been beaten hollow on all the battlefronts in what we now refer to as the First World War. The nation had no more strength to continue the fight. Germany sought peace. It hoped against hope that the victors would be fair and square. But they were in no mood to be liberal and charitable. They wanted peace

on their own terms. That was only expected. The negotiations continued all through the night. Every term set by the victors hit Germany's future badly. Yet Germany had to agree.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed at 5 a.m. on November 11, 1918. After six hours, at 11 a.m., the guns stopped booming. The world was at peace again. The peace terms left Germany bleeding. Its overseas territories were taken away. Nearer home, Germany lost more than 40,000 sq. km. of territory. The loss of Lorraine and Luxemburg led to deprivation of access to iron ore (65 per cent of iron ore that Germany needed came form these two areas). The loss of Saar and Silesia severely cut down on the availability of coal by 45 per cent. The size of the German army was limited to 100,000. The size of holdings of arms and armaments and ammunition, too, was severely curtailed. The worst affected was the German Air Force. These were steps aimed at crippling

Germany's armed strength. The agony of Germany mounted when a provision for huge monetary reparation was added on to the Treaty. The total amount sought was of the order of \$ 33,000,000,000. This was well beyond the means of Germany.

The German delegation objected to every one of the restrictions. They said these went against the pre-armistice agreements. But their pleas fell on deaf ears. The victors were determined to have their pounds of flesh. Germany was forced to sign on the dotted line. The Treaty of Versailles left Germany virtually chained by a horde of restraints on the political, economic and military front.

Bad times never last. Germany waited for better times to come. For some time, the victors kept a hawk's eye on every act of Germany. The restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles were strictly enforced. But, with time, the severity of the checks slackened. This became more marked after the formation of the League of Nations, a world body that emerged out of the USA, basics laid down by President Woodrow Wilson to ensure peace for all times to come.

The objectives set before the League of Nations, which came into being in January 1920 and had its offices in Geneva, were lofty. It was hoped that the League would settle international disputes and thus prevent war. It was stated that with some give and take, nations could promote international cooperation. The League, declared President Wilson, would guarantee independence and territorial integrity of nations. The member nations promised to take every issue to arbitration. All these looked perfect on paper. But it is not on paper that relations between nations get defined. Power knows no barriers. Contractual obligations between the weak and the strong last only so long as the strong observes the code. The hopes raised by the League of Nations did not last for long.

In 1931, Japan went to war with Manchuria and, when the League reminded it of the code of conduct, it chose to quit the League than give up belligerency. Italy overran Ethiopia in 1935 and dropped out of the League two years later when the League condemned its defiance of its charter. In other words, nations stuck to the League so long it served their interests. When it did not, they just

ignored it. Around 1937, the League had lost even the minimal bite that it had.

Germany, taking full advantage of the relaxation of scrutiny of the observance of the Treaty of Versailles, gaining a fresh voice under the powerful leadership of Adolf Hitler, began to rearm



itself. By 1937, Germany became strong enough to challenge the might of the so-called super powers, including Britain and France. Hitler decided to test the waters. He did that by moving his forces into Sudetanland, the rugged mountain terrain of Czechoslovakia that had a large number of people of German origin. When the world acquiesced in his action, he gained courage to attack Poland. Peace became a thing of the past. Mankind was plunged into the abyss of the Second World War.

World War II ended in 1945. Then came the time to review the experiences of the past. Why had the League failed? Could the experiences help devise a new organization that would be more effective? World leaders put their heads together. The discussions led to the revamping of the League. The new organization was named the United Nations. Its charter aimed at saving successive generations from the scourge of war. It reaffirmed faith in fundamental human rights, resolved to handle treaties and other obligations under international law and thus promote social progress and sovereign equality of all members. Fine words. But words do not actions make. So, has the UN much of a future? Will man ever learn to live in peace? Or will he go the way of the dinosaur? Who knows for certain?

Postscript: For several years, the world remembered the Treaty of Versailles by halting all activity at 11 a.m. on November 11 every year and observing silence for two minutes.

- By R.K.Murthi

Sreelakshmi M.S., Calicut writes:

I started reading Chandamama when I was in Third Standard. I am now in Sixth, Chandamama is very interesting to read. The stories are very amusing. My favourites are Ruskin Bond, Jataka Tales, Folk Tales, Laugh Till You Drop, and Kaleidoscope. Chandamama helps me to speak better English.

Reader A. Geethanjali Nanda, Bangalore, writes:

I am a fan of Chandamama. All stories are very nice and full of fun. I especially like Laugh Till You Drop, Puzzle Dazzle, and Riddles. In fact I like everything in the magazine. I am thanking the Editor for giving us such a nice book.

This came from Subhayan Mukerjee, Kolkata:

I like your wonderful monthly magazine and every month I wait for it breathlessly. I am missing interesting articles like Durga Puja. I enjoy reading Arya, True cases of Mystery and Detection, and New Tales of Vikram and Vetala. Keep it up!

Reader Shivan Kesavan writes from Madurai:

Like eating, sleeping, and taking a bath, Chandamama has become a part of my routine life. Though I started reading it only three years back, I think there is no match for Chandamama. One reason is that the mythological stories that you publish have become as all-age favourite. Hats off to Chandamama! Keep up this good work. You deserve appreciation also for the spellbinding illustrations.

This came by e-mail from B.Shrividya:

l am glad you have added me as a member of your Chandamama. Please give us real life stories of detection and mystery and stories of brave people.

Reader Deepak of Sonepur, Orissa, has this to say:

I am a regular reader of Chandamama. I like it very much. What I like most are Arya, Arabian Nights and Jataka Tales. I also like Kaleidoscope. Please continue to give more good stories.

A 'POWER'LESS TIME

Ooh! What a hot day! Please switch on the fan, Mummy!" exclaims Veena, flopping on to the sofa and throwing her schoolbag down. But why is her mother silent? Veena looks up and notices that there are no lights on; the fans are still; the humming of the fridge is conspicuous by its absence!

"Oh, NO! Don't tell me there's a power failure again!" exclaims Veena in chagrin.

Giving a sympathetic smile, her mother answers, "Not a power failure, Veena, but a power cut! Didn't you read it in the newspaper? Because of acute power shortage, the government has decided to impose a three hour power cut, from today!"

"Three hours!" groans Veena. "How on earth are we going to manage in the hot afternoons?"

"We have to," replies her mother. "We've no choice. Until the rains come – and that is a good four months away – there is not enough water in the catchment area to produce all the electricity our State normally consumes. That is why the government is forced to resort to this method of conserving power." Veena thoughtfully helps herself to a glass of tepid squash (the fridge having lost its cooling because of the long power cut). There is silence as she sips her drink.

"Mummy," Veena finds her voice at last, "is there some way in which we can save power and help ward off such a crisis?"

Website: www.pcra.org

"Each one can, and should do his or her own bit to save power, Veena," replies her mother. "Little drops of water make an ocean, don't they? If everybody takes this seriously, surely a great power crisis can be averted!"

She pauses to let the words register, and then continues. "We should see that we do not waste electricity unnecessarily. Even such a simple act as switching off the lights and fans when you leave a room will make a lot of difference!"

Veena flushes guiltily. This is one thing she usually forgets to do while

leaving her room!

Her mother continues: "Similarly, there are many other things you can do. Keeping the fridge door open for long periods of time consumes more electricity so you must take care to avoid doing it. Also, remember to switch off the heater as soon as you've finished your bath, as it consumes a good deal of power. Just remember, the bottomline is – switch off all electrical appliances when not in use. Producing electricity is a difficult and costly exercise. So, use it as sparingly as possible!"

"I'll remember that, Mummy," promises Veena.

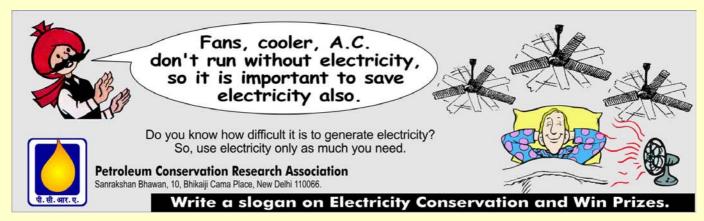


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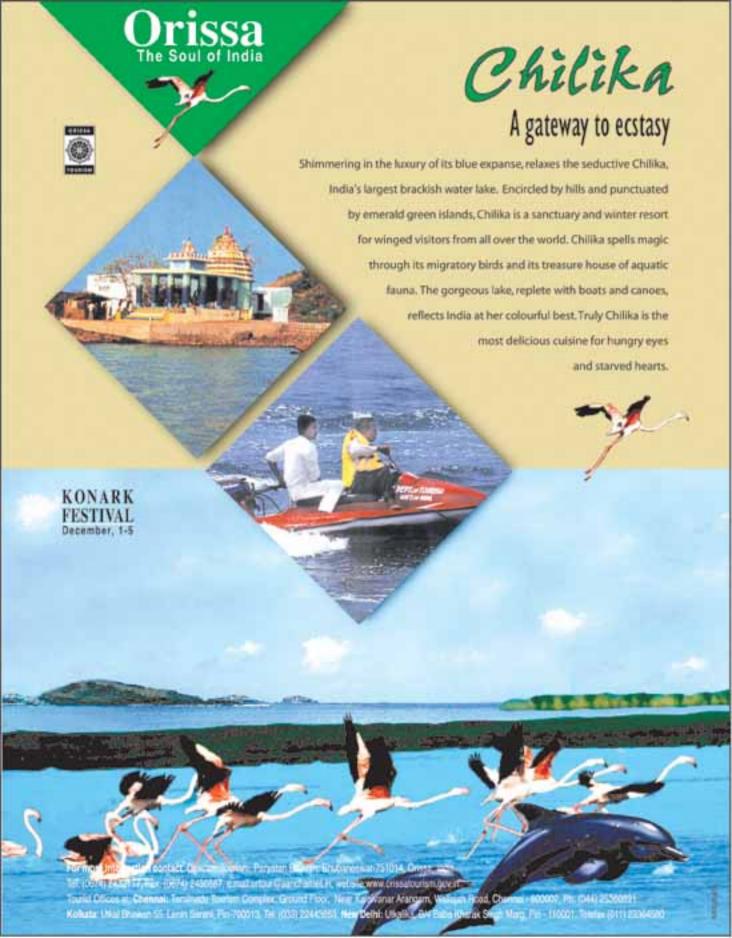
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